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ABSTRACT

The increasing number of families in which both partners work has focused attention on the relationship between work and family environments, and the consequences when employers and employees attempt to balance work and family responsibilities. This qualitative study explored whether the connections between family and work life were identified as concerns by employers and how they responded to associated issues. Human resource and personnel managers (N=53) from 40 companies were questioned in semi-structured interviews to explore how the corporate response to work and family issues was influenced by the corporate ethos. Corporate values, on the whole, were still based on the premise that work and family lives were separate worlds. The corporate world explored in this survey was still largely a traditional man's domain and standards of work behavior and career advancement were basically shaped by the assumption that there was someone else to take care of all family and non-work responsibilities. Reluctance on the part of employers to initiate or expand family-oriented policies stemmed from several sources. One was confusion about who should be responsible for the consequences of changes in the social and economic forces affecting the workplace and workers. Another was entrenched beliefs about the roles of men and women and the economics of running a company. Implications of the study are discussed, and the questionnaire is included in an appendix. (LLL)

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Work and Family

Employers' views

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Employers' views

Ilene Wolcott

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Foreword

The days of the male breadwinner–female housewife system of family life have gone. Yet this model still lies behind our work structures and lurks in the mind of the man in the gray flannel suit.

The gap between an idealised family model and the real links between families and paid work widens every day, so we should expect that reality gap to raise some doubts in the minds of employers. This study, pleasingly, shows those doubts do exist and, more importantly, that employers in large companies are taking some action to ensure a better 'fit' between work and family life.

This Institute has pursued the work–family issue because we know it is of central importance to the family lives of Australian workers. We have studied child care, maternity leave, trends in women's labour force participation and the changing nature of marital roles.

This is the first study to look closely at what the managers of large companies think about such issues. It does not preach at them; rather it asks whether or not they see family matters as part of the employer's responsibility at all, whether they understand the reciprocal impacts of work and family, and what they think they can and should do about it.

We are aware that smaller businesses face different problems in dealing with the family responsibilities of workers; a separate study will deal with this. We are also aware that the attitudes of trade unions are crucial in blocking or stimulating changes in line with ILO Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities; another study is looking at their role. But we trust this report will throw new light on how large companies perceive the issue. They are more progressive than many may imagine, and they report some of the obstacles to good intentions.

I want to thank the company managers who participated in this study, the Affirmative Action Agency who assisted in setting it up, and the many employers and media outlets who have helped us publicise the work–family issue.

In the end, it is a 'win–win' issue, for employers gain in productivity and employees achieve a better quality of family life. Without both, Australia is in bigger trouble than most people realise.

Don Edgar
Director
Australian Institute of Family Studies

About This Study

The increasing number of families in which both partners and parents work has focused attention on the relationships between work and family environments, and the consequences when employers and employees attempt to balance work and family responsibilities. Assumptions about the structure of work and the work of families are challenged when both husbands and wives or single parents have obligations in these often competing domains.

All workers have families and with family ties come responsibilities of care and support, whether caring for children or helping elderly relatives. Families can provide support and encouragement for workers in how they perform their jobs, or be a source of worry and stress that interferes with getting the job done. Employers are rightly concerned with productivity and profit; the ability of employees to manage the obligations of work and family can be essential in achieving these aims.

American sociologists Kamerman and Kahn (1987), who have followed trends in work and family issues for several decades, have observed, '... society has changed, work has changed; therefore, the workplace should change too'.

Changes in family and gender relationships have had a profound effect on Australian society. The entrance of women into the workforce has altered the way people think about work and family life and how the two can be organised. While the attention has been on changes in women's expectations and behaviours, men's roles and experiences are also affected. Fuchs (1988)

states, 'The decisions that individual women and men make with respect to work, marriage, fertility and child care affect their communities, their states and the nation.'

Legislation, bureaucracy and unions have begun to address the issues for workers with family responsibilities. In March 1990, Australia ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 156, 'Workers with Family Responsibilities' which requires its signatories to promote services to improve conditions for workers with family responsibilities. A Work and Family Unit was established within the Department of Industrial Relations to liaise with State, Territory, Commonwealth and community bodies on the needs of workers with family responsibilities.

The Government's 1990 National Child Care Strategy commitment to provide 30 000 places by 1993 has been extended to include an additional 50 000 places by 1996. Approximately 14 000 of these places are expected to be provided by employers with incentives created under the 1988 Industry Initiative. These will assist employers to establish work-based child care through tax benefits (see Chapter Two for details). Fee relief for low and middle income families using government or commercial child care was extended (Department of Community Services and Health 1990).

The Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act 1986 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 provided initiatives to assist women to achieve educational and vocational goals. The Affirmative Action Agency monitors private sector and higher education institution compliance with the Act. Most States have established women's employment branches to encourage access to a wider range of occupations.

Many corporations have appointed an equal opportunity officer or assigned these duties to personnel and human resource managers. In 1985, the Business Council of Australia and the Confederation of Australian Industry established a Council for Equal Employment Opportunity.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) adopted an 'Action Program for Women Workers' in 1988 to promote child care, flexible working hours and various forms of parental leave.

While women's dual roles as caregivers and workers have received the most attention, the understanding that men are fathers too and have family obligations is gaining recognition. The Australian Industrial Relations Commission recently decided in favor of the ACTU case seeking unpaid parental leave for fathers. The decision allows fathers to share in 52 weeks unpaid leave, a benefit previously available only to mothers. In consultation with employers, part-time work up to a child's second birthday may be negotiated (ACTU 1989).

A few Australian employers have set up child care centres or school holiday programs and others are assessing the needs of their employees for child care and alternative working schedules.

However, although government, unions and some employers, both in Australia and overseas, have implemented or are considering policies to assist workers with family responsibilities, less is known about the attitude of Australian employers to work and family issues. This report is an attempt to extend our understanding of employers' perceptions about the connections between work and family life.

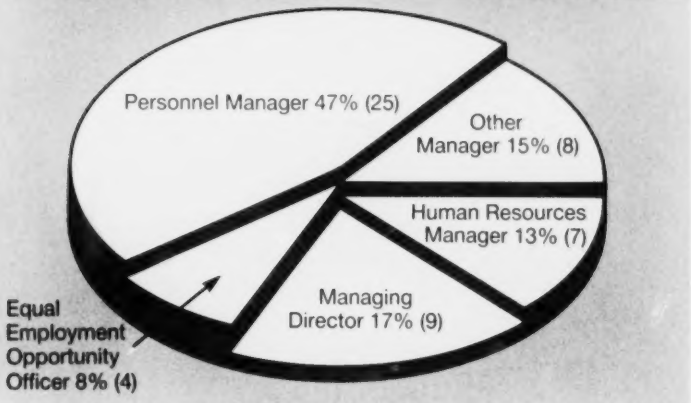
The report summarises the demographic and social changes affecting work and family life. Some of the government and corporate initiatives taking place overseas and in Australia are described. It presents the findings from a qualitative study of Australian companies that explored employer perceptions, attitudes and responses regarding work and family issues and the implications for shaping the provision of policies that support workers with family responsibilities.

The study examines what employee matters are considered critical, whether work and family conflicts are recognised as a problem, how an employee's family needs are catered for, what policies or initiatives that are supportive to families have been considered or implemented, what are the constraints and where is the resistance to introducing benefits, and what is the attitude of each company to men and women sharing family responsibilities.

Methodology

The study was based on 53 semi-structured interviews with human resource, personnel, equal opportunity or general managers in 40 companies in several Australian States between August–December 1990. Letters explaining the study were sent to human resource or personnel directors and appointments were subse-

Figure 1: Title and number of people interviewed


Personnel Manager 47% (25)
Other Manager 15% (8)
Human Resources Manager 13% (7)
Managing Director 17% (9)
Equal Employment Opportunity Officer 8% (4)

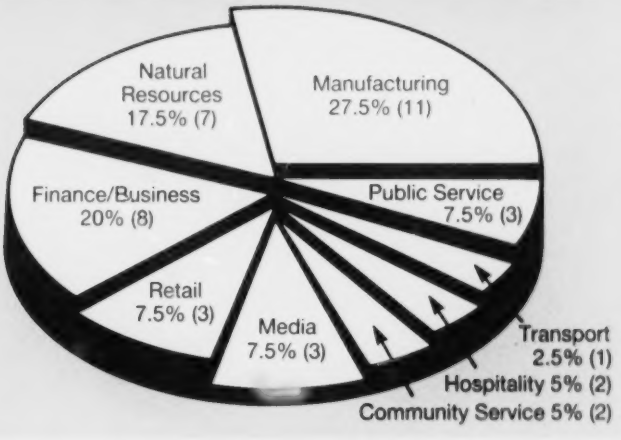
quently arranged by telephone. The majority of interviews were conducted in person at the main headquarters of the companies. Additional interviews were conducted by telephone with managers of individual business units within conglomerate companies.

Human resource managers, personnel directors and equal opportunity officers may share titles and responsibilities. These professionals were chosen because of their broad involvement in company policy and employee relations. Their roles can include assessing employment needs, developing recruitment, selection and promotion criteria, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements such as affirmative action and award restructuring, identifying employee problem areas, reviewing benefits and developing training and career advancement strategies.

A non-random sample of employers was selected to provide a cross-section of employer experience. These are large companies and do not include small businesses, where conditions and responses would be quite different. Discussions with the Affirmative Action Agency and the Office of the Family in Western Australia acted as a guide to some companies considered to be interested in such issues. Some effort was made not to duplicate research with the few companies that had received extensive publicity about their initiatives in providing child care.

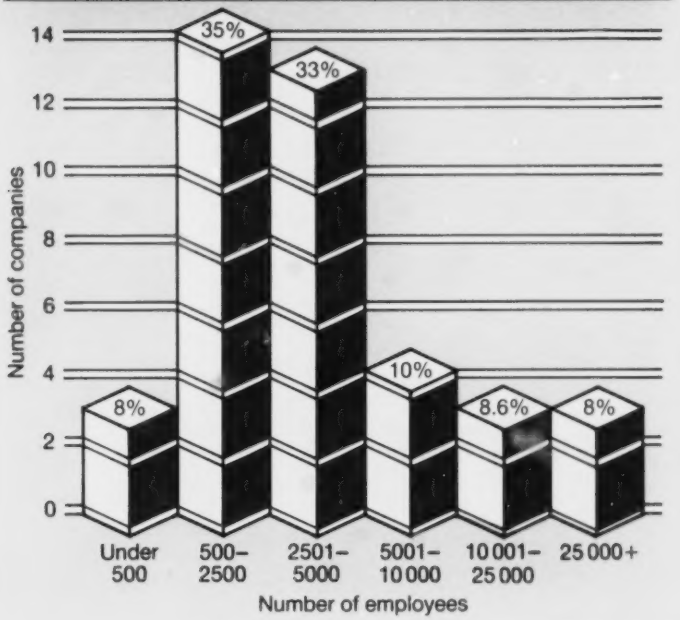
A range of industries was included: food, textile and other manufacturing, natural resources production, transport, retail, finance, legal, health, hospitality and communication. Several public service agencies were included. Manufacturing companies formed the largest number.

Figure 2: Industry sector: type and number



Company size ranged from three companies with less than 500 employees to three companies with more than 25 000 workers. The majority of companies had a workforce of between 500–2500.

Figure 3: Company size



The 37 private sector companies interviewed employed a total of 175 350 employees. Of these 84 403, or 48 per cent, were women. In the three public service organisations, 114 192 people were employed and 23 647, or 21 per cent, were women.

Table 1: Number of employees in companies surveyed

Sector	Males	Females	Total
Private	90 946	84 403	175 350
Public	90 545	23 647	114 192
Total	181 491	108 050	289 542

The Changing Worlds of Work and Family

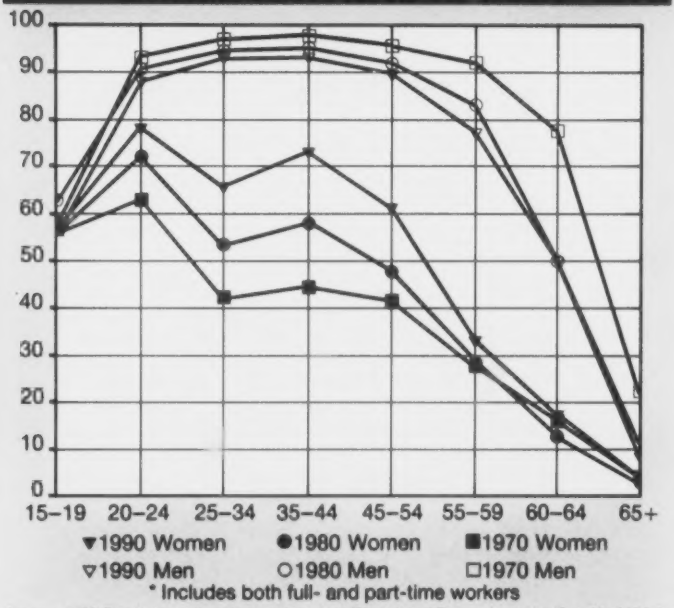
One of the foremost factors influencing the way Australian men and women organise their work and family lives has been the influx of women, particularly mothers, into the paid workforce.

In June 1990 women comprised 42 per cent of the labour force. Approximately 70 per cent of all women aged between 20 and 55 were in the labour force compared with 93 per cent of men. These figures contrast dramatically with 1961 when women comprised 25 per cent of the workforce, and 28 per cent of women compared with 97 per cent of men aged 20–59 were in the labour force. In the decade 1980–1990, the participation rate of all women grew by 8 per cent, for married women 11 per cent and for men fell by 3 per cent (Maas 1990).

The proportion of married women in the labour force rose from 17 per cent in 1954 to 53 per cent in 1990. Nearly 46 per cent of single mothers are also in the workforce. More relevant, perhaps, is that 43 per cent of all women and 41 per cent of all men in the labour force have dependent children. Nearly 59 per cent of employed married women have dependent children. It is important to emphasise that 62 per cent of employed married men also have children. Of these parents in the labour force, 17 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women have children under four (ABS *Labour Force* 1990).

Only 35 per cent of two-parent families with children conform to the traditional image of husbands being the sole breadwinner and wives remaining at home performing most of the domestic tasks and caring for children and other dependent relatives.

Figure 4: Participation rate of men and women by age over two decades*



* Includes both full- and part-time workers

Source: AIFS Family Indicators Project based on The Labour Force, Australia (Cat. No.6203.0) Australian Bureau of Statistics

Women have taken a 59 per cent share of the 1.5 million jobs created since 1982. Growth has been concentrated mainly in the service industries where women employees dominate. Women comprise the majority of workers in some industries: 65 per cent in community services, 57 per cent in recreation, personnel and other services and 50 per cent in finance, property and business services. Women make up 45 per cent of those employed in the retail sector (Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Women and Work* 1990).

Being in the workforce can have a different meaning for men and women. For example, 60 per cent of all female employees are employed full-time compared with 92 per cent of male employees. Women account for 77 per cent of the part-time workforce with married women comprising 55 per cent of all part-time employees (*Women and Work* 1990).

A desire for improved material standards doubtless contributes to the wish for additional income in families where both parents work. Rising housing costs and interest rates combined with the costs of raising children are an added impetus for women to enter the workforce. Median house prices in Melbourne rose from

$25 500 in 1974 to $132 000 in 1989 (Department of Property and Services 1989). Between 1986–88, mortgage payments as a percentage of mean weekly income reached 24.8 per cent compared with 9.5 per cent in 1968–72 (ABS *Housing Survey* 1988).

A middle income family can be expected to spend a minimum of $59.24 a week caring for an eight-year-old child, excluding housing, transport, school fees and medical or dental expenses (McDonald 1990).

High divorce rates have contributed to the increase in sole-parent families. In 1989 there were 41 383 divorces involving 43 317 dependent children (ABS Divorces 1990). Single-parent families constituted almost 15 per cent of all families with dependent children in 1990 compared with 9 per cent in 1974. More than 90 per cent of single-parent families are headed by mothers. Sole parents who have relied on pensions for income are being encouraged to join training and education programs to improve their employment prospects.

Accompanying these demographic shifts are changes in attitudes about work and family life. For most people, men and women, the primary reason and reward for working is economic — to provide a good standard of living and financial security. Economic considerations are not, however, the only motivation. Work also provides a sense of accomplishment, enhances self-esteem and independence and increases personal satisfaction (Cleminger 1986, Wolcott 1986, Voydanoff 1987).

Recent studies examining the changing attitudes of women towards marriage, family and work suggest that the proportion of women who consider a career important as well as motherhood has increased (Glezer 1984, Cleminger 1986). Glezer (1984) compared women's responses in 1971 and 1981 to questions about work and family life. The percentage of married women who agreed that, 'whatever career a woman may have, motherhood is still her most important role' decreased from 78 per cent to 46 per cent. Only 17 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women in the Institute's Family Formation Study 1990 agreed that a 'husband's job is to earn money and a wife's job is to look after the house' (Glezer 1991).

Another indication of women's desire to pursue careers is their increasing involvement in higher education and training; women hold 27 per cent of degrees in administration, 24 per cent of law degrees and 32 per cent of degrees in medicine, science and computing (*Labour Force Status and Educational Attainment*, ABS 1989).

During the past decade, the Australian work and economic environment has also altered rapidly. Global shifts in trade and international competition have focused corporate energies on reducing costs and improving productivity. The recession in 1990 led to 'downsizing' or retrenchment across industries and businesses small and large. Award restructuring, multi-skilling and

enterprise-based bargaining are some of the strategies being considered to increase flexibility in work organisation and management (Department of Industrial Relations 1988, Business Council of Australia 1989, ACTU/TDC 1987).

Technological advancement accompanied by a shift in growth from manufacturing to the service industries has changed the mixture of skills and labour force requirements. The greatest growth in new jobs in the period 1982–90 has been in finance, property and business services, recreational, personal and other services and community services.

There has been concern about the projected decrease in the number of potential workers in the next decades. Decreased fertility rates (2.95 in 1971 compared with 1.89 in 1988) and an ageing population (24 per cent of the population was aged 50+ in 1989) will likely result in a shortage of young entrants to the workforce (Maas 1990).

The Sex Discrimination Act (1984) and the Affirmative Action Act (1986) have forced employers to examine policies and practices that promote or hinder women's employment opportunities. The Australian Government's recent ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention 156 will be seen as another move to encourage employers to assist women and men in balancing dual roles as employee and family carer.

Changes in the structure and nature of work and family environments underscore the need to re-evaluate policies based on outdated assumptions about workforce participation and family life.

Where both parents or a single parent is employed, the reciprocal effects on work and family depend on how employees, employers and the community develop strategies to enable workers with family responsibilities to meet the often conflicting demands of both roles.

Workers also have responsibilities for family members other than children. The ageing of our population means that men and women in their late 40s and early 50s, most of whom will be working, may have to provide care for elderly parents. Approximately 122 000 people in the labour force are also the main carers for a severely handicapped person in their own home (ABS, *Carers of the Handicapped at Home 1988*). Many others have ageing parents whose needs are less extreme but who will rely to some extent on assistance from their middle-aged offspring.

Work and family roles have been viewed as complementary spheres — the world of paid employment for men and home duties for women. The workplace, Rapoport and Rapoport (1976) observed, has been structured as though workers did not have families or, if they did, that there was a spouse at home to take care of all domestic tasks. In the past, and perhaps still today, single people would have been expected to have a mother at home or to live somewhere like a boarding house that provided

basic domestic services.

This nostalgic 'myth of the separate worlds of work and family life' (Kanter 1977), where the responsibilities and activities of one are assumed not to interfere with the other, has become more difficult to maintain. As Friedman and Gray (1989) aptly state, 'It is no longer possible for workers to leave their personal problems at home, as company cultures dictate, because someone is rarely home to solve them.'

Balancing Acts

Attempting to balance work and family life under contemporary conditions appears to produce inevitable stress and conflict, as reported in studies of employees in a variety of work settings (Pleck 1985, Jaeckel 1986, Galinsky, Hughes and Shinn 1986, Wolcott 1986, Pleck, Staines and Lang 1980, General Mills 1981). These studies generally report that about one-third to one-half of workers experience conflict between work and family roles.

Finding time to be together as a family and attend to family matters are the main problems identified. Families face difficulties in locating and obtaining child care, coordinating work schedules with school and community services and meshing work hours with family activities (Galinsky and Stein 1990, Christensen and Staines 1990, Ochiltree and Edgar 1991).

Common underlying causes of stress are excessive work hours, rigid work schedules and the 'spillover' of fatigue, preoccupation and irritability from work to the family (Galinsky 1986, Eckenrode and Gore 1990). Boring routine blue-collar jobs as well as demanding, absorbing professional careers have been found to generate tension in family life (Piotrkowski and Katz 1983).

Nearly 40 per cent of men and women in double income families in one Institute study (Wolcott 1986) said their work had a negative effect on family life. The reasons most often given were associated with long, extended or inconvenient hours and inflexible work schedules that reduced the amount of time and energy they had to give to their families. These findings are confirmed in the Institute's recent Family Formation Study (Glezer 1991), which found that 30 per cent of parents, fathers and mothers, often did not have the energy to be a good parent when they returned home from work.

Different stages of family life have a bearing on levels of stress and the ability to cope with dual roles — whether there are preschoolers or teenagers, if there are elderly parents to care for and the overall economic status of the family. Children and other dependents consume time and energy. Those with better financial resources may be able to purchase goods and services to reduce some of the burden (Voydanoff and Kelly 1984).

The structure of the workplace — the amount of control and autonomy over one's work, the attitudes of supervisors, and the

general expectations of corporate culture — also influence the degree of stress and conflict experienced (Eckenrode and Gore 1990). Job satisfaction and a moderate sense of autonomy at work have a positive influence on family life (Voydanoff 1987).

Levels of conflict and stress caused by combining work and family responsibilities have been linked to the attitudes, expectations and priorities of both partners (Wethington and Kessler 1989, Verbrugge 1986), and to the level of perceived and actual support in carrying out preferred roles (Potuchek 1988). Where there is minimum discrepancy between choice and necessity, women's stress is reduced.

Since men do not usually consider working or not working a choice, unemployment has been assumed to affect their well-being (Kline and Cowan 1988). Women may feel more conflict and guilt over not being a full-time parent because they are conditioned more than men to feel responsible for child care and domestic relationships (Scott and Alwin 1989).

Where husbands support their wives working and cooperate with household tasks and child care, women experience less stress. Men's satisfaction with their wives' employment, however, appears to depend on the degree to which they feel inconvenienced in exchange for increased family income (Scarr, Phillips and McCartney 1989), or their sense of identity is threatened (Thompson and Walker 1989).

Working mothers/working fathers

Although approximately equal numbers of men and women in the labour force have dependent children and other family responsibilities, it is usually working mothers, not fathers, who are considered problematic.

Research indicates it is women who contemplate quitting work, rearranging work schedules or taking time off to care for children and elderly parents. An Institute study of maternity leave reported the main reasons given by women for not returning to work after the birth of a child were the adequacy, cost and availability of child care, difficulty in finding part-time work or a desire to stay at home to care for their child (Glezer 1988). According to the ABS survey *Persons Not in the Labour Force 1989*, the majority of women gave 'family reasons' (including a preference for looking after young children, not being able to find suitable child care or caring for an ill family member) as the main reason for not working.

Difficulties in juggling work and family commitments are one reason why women with children prefer part-time work. Approximately 40 per cent of women are employed part-time. Few men appear to have advocated equal access for themselves to share in the care of children, the elderly and family tasks by citing a preference for part-time employment. An ABS survey, *Alternative Working Arrangements 1986*, indicated that overall, 12 per cent of

women working full-time compared with 5 per cent of men preferred to work fewer hours. One-third of women compared with 11 per cent of men who were looking for work declared a preference for part-time work. Nearly two-thirds of people who wished to work fewer hours were in the childbearing age range of 25–45.

Approximately 58 per cent of mothers in the AIFS Family Formation Study (Glezer 1991) preferred part-time work compared with 15 per cent of fathers.

A time use pilot study conducted by the ABS in 1988 revealed that married women in paid work spent more than twice the amount of time on mending and caring for children, the sick and the disabled as employed married men. Some of this imbalance can be attributed to the fact that more men than women work full-time and for longer hours, however studies that control for hours of work suggest that attitudes also influence the sharing of household tasks and child care (Pleck 1985, Goldsmith 1988, Scott and Alwin 1989).

There appear to be, as Pleck (1985) has observed, 'asymmetrical boundaries' between work and family roles for men and women, with family responsibilities allowed to intrude more on women's paid work than men's. A number of American studies (Fernandez 1986) confirm that women with preschool children take more workdays a year than men to care for children. A Statistics Canada study revealed that women with preschool children had a higher incidence of absence for personal reasons than men (Paris 1989). Burden and Googins (1985) found that women employees were six times more likely to stay at home with a sick child than men. Friedman (1987) suggests that 'men's absenteeism is low because women's absenteeism rates are high'.

Another perspective is provided by Mumford (1989), who examined Australian patterns and concluded that women during their childbearing years (25–44) showed little difference in absenteeism than men, a finding reflected in some of this study's responses which indicated similar levels of absence but for different reasons.

More than one-half of working mothers with preschool children in the Institute's Early Childhood Study (Ochiltree and Greenblat 1991) usually took time off work if their child was sick compared with 8 per cent of fathers. In the Australian Institute of Family Studies' Family Formation Study (Glezer 1991), 39 per cent of mothers and 26 per cent of fathers had taken some time off to care for sick children in the 12 months before the survey.

Why Employers Should be Concerned

Why should employers be concerned about the family lives of their employees? Some of the answers can be found in the demographic changes described previously. Today's workforce

and that of the future will be made up not only of working men but of working women, mothers as well as fathers. Productivity and competitiveness will be affected by the ability of men and women to balance their roles as employees and carers of family members.

As Edgar (1989) observes, 'Whether young and single, married and middle-aged, every individual has a family. That family relies on their care and support, gives them headaches, causes both absenteeism and positive morale, is a silent (although often not so silent) partner in employee relations.'

Concerns about child care, sick children and other family dependents, marital and family problems can interfere with concentration at work and increase absenteeism, lateness, and leaving early (Crouter 1984; Axel 1985; Paris 1989; Galinsky, Hughes and Shinn 1986; Fernandez 1986; Friedman 1987; Lewis 1990).

A survey by the Conference Board of Canada (Paris 1989) found that one-half of companies attributed one-quarter or more of their absenteeism and stress to work and family conflicts. Approximately 15 per cent of workers, the majority women, in one United States study (Anastas, Gibeau and Larson 1990) had missed a week or more of work during the year caring for elderly people.

In Australia, a 1989 survey of 400 employees at BHP Port Kembla found a total of 349 work days were lost due to child care. A survey of employees in one office of the Australian Taxation Office (Lewis 1990) found that a total of 630 days were taken off work due to children being sick. Other days were lost because of problems with child care. Of interest was that one-third of the parents who took time off to stay home with sick children were men. Parents, both male and female, in this study said that concerns about child care affected concentration at work and opportunities for training.

Family responsibilities can influence workers' ability to take on additional responsibilities, travel or transfers. One United States study of corporate relocation practices (Catalyst 1983) reported that 24 per cent of executives refused to transfer mainly due to a wish not to disrupt family life. Friedman and Gray (1989) cite the example of a study conducted by Merrill Lynch Realty that found 26 per cent of 'first choice' candidates in 280 companies refused or expressed reluctance to move because of the high cost of housing in a new area or concerns about children's adjustment and wives' careers.

When employees are preoccupied or absent because of family concerns, a 'ripple' effect has been observed on co-workers' effectiveness and efficiency, especially in teams where work is dependent on each member's contribution (Crouter 1984, Lewis 1990). Almost half of a sample of United States university employees (Mize and Freeman 1989) claimed their work had been disrupted by the child care problems of other workers during the past year.

Valued employees may be lost when workers do not return to work after maternity leave because adequate child care is not available. The retention of skilled workers can save companies the costs of recruiting and retraining new staff, estimated in some cases to be 20 per cent of the annual salary of an employee.

In addition, employers must comply with affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation that requires companies to demonstrate that their policies, practices and benefits are conducive to women's employment.

Companies in Australia and overseas report a number of advantages and cost-benefits in providing 'family-friendly' support services. Among the benefits cited by companies are improved retention of skilled women employees; reduced training and recruitment costs when workers return after maternity leave; decreased absenteeism, coming late and leaving early; improved employee morale and reduced stress (Paris 1989, Berry-Lound 1990, Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment 1990, Child Care At Work Ltd 1989).

What Families Need

There appears to be consensus on what basic supports would help balance work and family responsibilities. Studies of working families most commonly mention more time or flexible work schedules and leave options that are job-protected as desirable if the unexpected and routine demands of family life are to be met (General Mills 1981, Bohan and Viveros-Long 1981, Baden and Friedman 1981, Jaeckel 1986, Galinsky, Hughes and Shinn 1986, Glezer 1988).

For families with young children, child care (including infant care), after school hours and school holiday care are essential requirements. Time off to care for sick children and other family members or to deal with household emergencies is necessary (ACTU 1989). Surveys of Australian families reveal that the majority of working parents use informal day care provided by relatives or friends, and many families juggle two or more types of child care each week to meet their needs (Ochiltree and Edgar 1991).

Good hours, weekends off, a work location close to home and an employer sympathetic to family concerns all help to lessen conflict between work and family responsibilities (Wolcott 1986).

The importance of flexibility in work hours is clearly recognised by the International Labour Organisation: 'Whatever form it takes, a reduction in hours of work is one of the best ways of lightening the workload of people with family responsibilities' (ILO 1980). However, flexibility in job schedules cannot be considered separately from the need for people to earn an adequate income for the work they do perform.

When mothers in the Early Childhood Study (Ochiltree and Greenblat 1991) were asked to suggest anything that would make it easier for working mothers if they had a sick child, almost three-quarters mentioned either leave from work, more understanding, support and flexibility from employers and work-based child care.

Government Responses

Governments overseas and in Australia are playing a more significant role in assisting workers with family responsibilities. Initiatives range from the provision of generous parental leave and a wide net of social support services in Sweden to tax concessions to encourage greater sensitivity among employers in the United States. In Australia, the government has encouraged companies to adopt affirmative action policies, and has extended assistance to working families in other ways, such as subsidised child care.

Overseas

European government initiatives, particularly in Scandinavian countries, in providing paid and unpaid maternity, paternity and parental leave, child care, and sick child care leave have been held up as the standard by which other countries are measured (Kamerman and Kahn 1981). Sweden provides paid parental leave at 90 per cent of normal salary until the child is nine months old; if taken part-time, until 18 months of age. This time can be divided between the parents. Parents with a child under seven years old have the right to reduce their work hours to six hours, or three-quarters of full-time, with an accompanying loss of wages but guaranteed return to a full-time position. Up to 90 days a year at 90 per cent of salary is available for the care of a sick child (Nasman and Falkenberg 1989).

Examples from other European countries that provide annual leave to care for a sick child include: Austria, one week paid; Finland, four days unpaid up to age ten; Germany, five days paid; Greece, six to ten days unpaid; Portugal, 30 days paid up to age ten; and Norway, 30 days paid up to age ten (ILO 1988).

The United States has few such awards for family leave. However, more flexible tax incentives are available to encourage employer initiatives in providing dependent care benefits. For example, under United States tax legislation (Section 129 of the Internal Revenue Code), employers may participate in a dependent care assistance plan that allows employees to use before-tax dollars to purchase dependent care services for children and elderly relatives. Up to $5000 a year of an employee's salary can be set aside in a tax-free reimbursement account that is used to pay care expenses when receipts are submitted to employers (Kamerman and Kahn (1987). Companies incur only the administrative costs involved in setting up and monitoring the plan.

A dependent care assistance plan may be part of a company's

'flexible benefits', or 'cafeteria', plan. These enable employees to choose from a range, or 'menu', of tax deductible or taxable benefits. This is seen as one way to overcome the possible inequities of providing a benefit to only one group of employees (that is employees with young children) without providing equal compensation to other employees.

Recommendations in a report to the Canadian Ministry of Employment and Immigration (1987) called for adjustments to labour–employment legislation to accommodate the needs of workers with family responsibilities, altered insurance regulations to provide shared parental leave benefits and to extend sickness benefits to cover workers who care for sick dependents, and an expansion of employee assistance programs.

In 1990, the Unemployment Insurance Act was passed in Canada which provides 29 weeks of paid maternity/parental leave for all permanent workers. Fathers are entitled to take 12 weeks of this leave. The costs of the scheme are shared by the Government, employers and employees, who pay a contribution into the scheme. The scheme also covers unemployment and sick leave payments for all employees. Other legislation guarantees that women's jobs are held for one year of maternity leave. Federal employees are granted five years of unpaid family leave with a return to a comparable job.

In Australia

As described earlier, Australia ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 156 in March 1990. The Convention requires its signatories to promote initiatives to improve conditions for workers with family obligations. The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and the Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act 1986 were introduced to help women achieve educational and vocational goals.

Maternity leave became generally available for women in permanent and continuous jobs. Parental leave provisions were inserted into the Commonwealth Public Service Act 1985, and permanent part-time employment with pro rata benefits was introduced in the public service as a discretionary option. In 1990, the Industrial Relations Commission's decision on parental leave enabled fathers to share with mothers in 52 weeks of unpaid leave after the birth of a child, and to work part-time up to the child's second birthday.

Several bureaucracies have been created to monitor and encourage research on issues associated with women, work and family. The Women's Bureau within the Department of Employment, Education and Training advises and coordinates policy on issues related to women and employment. The Women's Employment, Education and Training Advisory Committee monitors award restructuring and training and provides comment to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. The Work and

Family Unit within the Department of Industrial Relations consults with other government and community bodies on the needs of workers with family responsibilities.

The Affirmative Action Agency monitors the progress of companies in meeting the goals set out in the Affirmative Action Act. Under the Act, employers are required to develop an affirmative action policy statement, consult with trade unions and employees about equal opportunity, review personnel policies and practices to identify discrimination against women, and set affirmative action goals.

The Commonwealth, as of March 1990, funded 124 000 child care places through the Children's Services Program. These places include family day care, community centre-based long day care, occasional care and outside school hours and vacation care. Non-profit organisations such as schools, churches and education institutions provide additional places and other centres are operated on a commercial basis.

The Government's 1990 National Child Care Strategy commitment to provide another 30 000 places by 1993 has been extended to include an additional 50 000 places by 1996. Fee relief for low and middle income families using both government and commercial child care was extended (Department of Community Services and Health 1990). Approximately 14 000 of the additional places are expected to be provided by employers with incentives created under the 1988 Industry Initiative to assist employers to establish work-based child care through tax benefits.

Employer Responses

A wide range of employer benefits are considered 'family-friendly' and enable workers with family responsibilities to carry out their dual roles more effectively. These benefits may be offered because they are required by government or negotiated with unions.

Companies may offer alternative work schedules (job sharing, annual hours contracts, home working/telecommuting, compressed workdays/weeks, flexitime, permanent part-time with pro-rata benefits); flexible leaves (maternity, paternity, parental, sick leave to care for dependents); dependent care provision (holiday camps, afterschool care, work based child care, support for community child care and elder care centres); employee assistance programs (information and referral on selecting child or elder care, seminars on family life, family counselling); relocation assistance (Friedman 1987, Wolcott 1987, Berry-Lound 1990).

Overseas

In terms of corporate responses to family responsibilities, the United States is considered a pacesetter. Major American companies, with the critical inducement of tax benefits, have provided direct or indirect subsidies for child care in the form of information and referral services, contributions to community child care

centres and establishment of on-site centres, sick child care centres, and vacation camps (Friedman 1987; Paris 1989; Kammerman and Kahn 1987, Graddick, Bassman and Giordano 1990).

Of the estimated 4300 American companies involved in child care initiatives, 1000 provide information and referral services to assist employees to find and assess child care; 2000 offer the Dependent Care Assistance Plan, which allows the deduction of up to $5000 from an employee's taxable income to pay for dependent care as a non-taxable employer fringe benefit; and 1200 provide a child care centre on site or nearby (800 of which are connected to hospitals) (Friedman and Gray 1989).

An increasingly popular form of child care assistance in the United States is sophisticated, computerised systems for workers to match their child care needs with available community resources. Some companies, individually or jointly, will hire someone, or contract a consulting firm, to compile a list of services, screen them, interview employees about their needs and even handle parent complaints (Baden and Friedman 1981). Time Warner Inc., for example, has a contract with The Child Care Solution, a nationwide resource and referral centre, which provides a toll-free number, counselling, parenting workshops, and information about tax deductions.

Also with the assistance of tax deductions, a number of large employers offer leave to care for elderly and ill relatives (Time Warner 1990). Other companies such as American Telephone and Telegraph and IBM offer a computerised referral and assistance service that helps employees to find community care and services for their elderly parents anywhere in the country, and to keep in touch with these services (Paris 1989; Neales, *Financial Review*, 7 November 1989).

Individual companies in the United States have provided financial or technical assistance to establish or expand child care centres in their communities. Contributions include grants for capital expenses, administrative, legal and accounting assistance, donations of books, toys and furniture, and funding for training and education courses for carers (Baden and Friedman 1981, Pati 1991).

Several American companies provide child care for mildly ill children either at specially staffed child care centres or with caregivers who come to the home (Fredericks, Hardman, Morgan and Rodgers 1986). The costs of these services may be paid entirely by the employer or shared by the employee and employer. Tax deductions may apply in some cases.

Lunchtime seminars on managing dual careers, parenting education or evaluating child care facilities are popular. Time Warner's 1991 series of work and family workshops include sessions on: 'Elder care: where to find what you need', 'The teenage years: what does it mean', 'Dealing with anger — yours

and your child's', 'Parenting in the 90's: step parent/blended families', 'Pregnancy after 35', and 'Staying in charge of your kids when you only have 15 minutes', among others (Time Warner 1990).

Employee assistance and counselling programs provide referrals and sometimes initial paid visits to community services that can assist employees with alcohol, drug and marital or family problems (Axel 1985).

The different needs of employees at various stages of their lives are taken into account when providing benefits. Additional vacation time may be of more use at one stage whereas child care, health insurance or extra pension benefits may be more useful at another time. To ensure companies do not offer just the least expensive packages, there are some safeguards that require employers to offer, and employees to select, a minimum of statutory benefits to guarantee the viability of certain benefits, such as health insurance.

It is essential to remember that the American 'corporate welfare system' referred to by Kamerman and Kahn (1987) would collapse without extensive tax policies or subsidies. And these foregone tax revenues are in themselves a form of government support of employer services. As more employees take advantage of dependent care tax options, the United States' Congress has expressed concern about the amount of forgone tax income to the Government.

Jaeckel (1986) describes a system introduced in West Germany that is believed to respond to the family needs of workers. While considering the needs of the business to meet productivity demands, an 'individual working time' schedule allows all employees to decide in advance the average number of hours per month they will work. During certain peak or slack times, hours may be adjusted but salaries remain even.

British surveys (Berry-Lound 1990) concluded that few employers were providing employees with any form of child care or other dependent care assistance, but used variously defined special leave as the means to these ends. A few companies were experimenting with 'career break' schemes, variations on extended maternity or parental leave (Rapoport and Moss 1989).

In Australia

In contrast to the United States where health and medical insurance subsidies are considered the most desirable company benefit, basic health and welfare supports such as medical insurance and unemployment benefits are part of the general wage and insurance provision in Australia. Paid holidays, sick leave and vacations are also included in most Australian awards for permanent workers, again in contrast to the United States where the average vacation is two weeks after one year's employment.

Overall, 97 per cent of men and women working full-time received some employment-related benefits compared with 53 per

cent of part-time employees. The main benefits for full-time workers were sick leave and annual leave (91 per cent). Fewer part-time workers received these benefits (30 per cent). Less than one per cent of employees received child care/education expenses as a benefit (ABS *Employment Benefits 1989*). Since women comprise 77 per cent of the part-time workforce, they are less likely to receive benefits.

One survey of employment advertisements in a daily Sydney newspaper (Russell 1990) reported that 38 per cent of the ads mentioned employee benefits, but none mentioned family-oriented benefits such as child care, flexible working hours or paid parental leave.

A survey of 100 large Australian companies by the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment (funded by the Confederation of Australian Industries and the Business Council of Australia) indicated that a number of companies, including Bonlac, Westpac Banking Ltd, and the Commonwealth Banking Corporation, had conducted employee surveys on equal opportunity issues. Several banks were exploring career breaks, reduced hours, and skill maintenance schemes to encourage women to return to work after maternity leave. The ANZ bank has produced a *Child Care and Community Resources* booklet for its staff (Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment 1990).

Other options available to employers include establishing joint child care centres with other nearby companies. ESSO/Lend Lease in Sydney is one example of a joint child care facility. A consortium of four Melbourne finance companies joined together to offer a school holiday program for their employees at a primary school (Affirmative Action Agency 1991). Some businesses are using the services of consultants to determine whether or not to set up their own child care centre (Neales, *Financial Review*, 7 November 1989).

As mentioned earlier, the Commonwealth Government's National Child Care Strategy provides incentives to encourage industry to invest in the provision of child care for employees (Department of Community Services and Health 1990). Child care or places secured for employees in centres under the Children's Services Program and in private child care centres are exempted from the fringe benefits tax.

Under this initiative, employers are required to provide the capital to construct the facility, but contributions towards the operating costs are tax deductible as normal business expenses and depreciation deductions apply for the building and equipment. The proportion of the total operating cost is expected to be shared in the following way: parents 43 per cent, Commonwealth 24 per cent (in the form of fee relief), and employers 33 per cent. Tax concessions available to employers are expected to reduce their contributions to about 20 per cent of the full cost (Department of Community Services and Health 1990).

3

The Study Results

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore whether the connections between family and work life were identified as concerns by employers and to ascertain how they responded to associated issues. Human resource and personnel managers were questioned in semi-structured interviews to explore how the corporate response to work and family issues was influenced by the corporate ethos, the way they believed companies should function and their employees behave.

The study began by asking employers to indicate which general employee issues were current or potential concerns. This more general discussion was expanded to determine if a range of problems, both those identified and additional concerns, were due to employees' family responsibilities.

Employee Issues

In mid to late 1990 when this survey took place, the Australian economy was suffering a marked downturn. This was reflected in a decelerating rate of employment growth, particularly in the private sector, and increasing unemployment. In May 1990, job vacancies in the private sector were down 37 per cent and in the public sector 15 per cent compared with the previous year. Unemployment was at 7 per cent of the labour force (Blandy 1990).

During this year the financial pages of the metropolitan newspapers featured headlines announcing retrenchments in white and blue collar jobs in firms and factories across the nation.

Employers in some industries attempted to renegotiate employment costs and benefits to prevent retrenchments or the business closing down. Fletcher Jones, a clothing manufacturer, secured an agreement with 150 workers to give up four days every month for one year (*The Australian*, 4 January 1991); Ford Motor shed 2200 workers and Nissan 500 (*The Age*, 6, 16 February 1991) while partners in the accounting firm of Coopers & Lybrand voted themselves a $2000 a month salary cut (*The Sunday Age*, 22 September 1990). Shops along suburban streets and arcades sprouted For Lease and For Sale signs, indicating that smaller businesses were also in difficulty.

The sense of foreboding was reflected in the answers to questions in the study about the critical employee issues confronting each company. Approximately one-half of the companies recently had, or were in the process of, retrenching staff. Overseas competition, technological change and decreased demand for products were the main reasons given. As one respondent said, 'If you can't sell products, there won't be any jobs.'

Award restructuring, defined by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (1990) as 'the updating of awards to develop skill related career paths, improved work environments and flexibility in enterprises', was mentioned by one-third of companies as taking up considerable time and energy.

For most respondents, award restructuring was referred to in terms of streamlining and retraining workers with the introduction of new technology or for the development of skills and initiative. 'Australia has to pay its way in the world, change the way it works, change the ordering process of the organisation to one based on merit,' said one natural resources company.

In several instances, if award restructuring were to allow part-time work, this was seen as the way to enable women to meet work and family responsibilities. 'Part-time work could be extended if the union would allow it,' said a communications company.

Concerns about recruitment, retention and absenteeism

Less than one-half of the employers surveyed were experiencing serious problems in human resource areas such as recruitment, retention, absenteeism or stress. Nevertheless, these issues were having some effect on most companies.

> *'Thank goodness, we have a very high retention rate.'* (business)

In a tight economy, overall recruitment was not a problem, but acquiring skilled workers, especially in scientific and technical areas, was a concern for more than one-quarter of the Australian companies interviewed.

> *'No problem recruiting or maintaining general level staff.'* (natural resources)

> *'More than enough people apply for jobs.'* (hospitality)
>
> *'Keeping skilled workers where training investments are made, particularly women, is important.'* (business)
>
> *'Maintaining the supply of scientific and technical workers is the critical issue.'* (natural resources)

Several natural resource companies sponsored educational programs in schools and offered scholarships to universities to encourage young women and men to enter science and maths disciplines. The lack of basic skills among those entering the workforce was mentioned by several companies.

> *'Upskilling through training and restructuring of jobs is on the agenda.'* (public sector)

Turnover and retention were said to be of some concern for one third of companies, although the reasons given were different for award and management levels and by industry sector. For example, one business firm indicated a high turnover in sales staff who were younger and without family responsibilities, who left to pursue other careers or to work for other employers.

> *'We train them so well they can command higher salaries elsewhere.'*

Turnover was also considered a natural aspect of some sectors.

> *'It's part of the nature of the hospitality industry, young workers come and go; there is a lack of loyalty and commitment.'*

In another context, one respondent noted, 'Probably a good thing in these times.'

Recruitment, retention or relocating professional staff at remote locations was a serious problem for nearly all the natural resource companies.

Absenteeism in general was defined as a moderate to minor problem for more than one-third of companies, but only at the shop or factory floor level.

> *'Absenteeism is quite high at the unskilled level.'* (natural resources)
>
> *'A few suffer from the sickie syndrome.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'Sickies are a problem in the lower ranks.'* (public service)
>
> *'Managers hardly ever take sick days.'* (manufacturing)

Leaving early or coming late to work was a minor problem for a few companies, again only at non-managerial levels.

Several managers indicated that job dissatisfaction was related to poor management style. The way jobs were organised and performance was reviewed was associated with levels of absenteeism.

> *'We have to improve the people skills of management to create better job satisfaction for staff.'* (retail)

Several studies of absenteeism at work have noted that it occurs more frequently in jobs that have lower status and less autonomy (Kriegler, Robertson, Tulsi 1989). These jobs also have less discretionary time that can be taken away from the workplace which does not have to be formally accounted for. Professionals and managers can frequently absorb personal time off for car repairs, organising social life and medical visits. Not all telephone calls in company time reflect the '3 o'clock call home to check on children' syndrome.

Stress was a concern at management level in four companies where professional staff were under pressure to work extensive hours, come in early, leave late, take work home or where staff were 'on-call' around the clock to deal with problems. At the factory level, night shift work was thought to cause marital problems.

> *'Night shift puts a lot of stress on marriages.'* (community services)

These concerns are echoed in US studies where matching the skills required in industry and commerce to the available or future labour force has prompted investment in higher education and on the job training (Conference Board 1989, Graddick, Bassman and Giordano 1990). A recent Canadian study (Paris 1989) of 375 companies showed that companies were experiencing minor problems with recruitment (44 per cent), retention (34 per cent), absenteeism (36 per cent), stress (49 per cent), and morale (48 per cent).

Making the Connection Between Work and Family

A main objective of this study was to determine whether companies were aware of any relationship between employees with family responsibilities and issues such as retention, absenteeism, relocation and productivity.

Employers were asked whether the family responsibilities of employees interfered with productivity and were associated with any of their human resource problems. While few companies had conducted any in-depth analysis of the needs of workers with

family responsibilities, one-third (14) of the companies had recently conducted surveys or informally consulted groups of employees about child care needs or their use of child care services.

How sensitive senior managers are to the influence of family life on work has been questioned. Human resource managers in one American study (General Mills 1981) consistently underestimated the importance of family considerations in employees' decisions, particularly men, on working overtime, accepting greater responsibility and willingness to travel and relocate.

Of those interviewed in this study, approximately 45 per cent (17) of companies did not believe family responsibilities had any effect on the workplace while five companies did not have any idea whether they did or not.

> *'Families do not really interfere with productivity.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'Don't know, not many staff are married or have families, it's a young staff, mostly in their 20s.'* (business)
>
> *'Not sure if family concerns interfere with productivity, we'll be doing a survey on child care.'* (natural resources)

Despite this general downplaying or lack of awareness of family, 46 per cent (18) of respondents thought family life had some effect on productivity but in varying degrees.

> *'Affect it to some extent, but hard to quantify.'* (natural resources)
>
> *'Now and again, but it's not a problem.'* (retail)
>
> *'Of course people take time off for family reasons, but it is not an issue, it is coped with.'* (hospitality)

In several cases, family concerns were well recognised:

> *'Most definitely interfered with productivity — marital problems and problems with kids that come to light when you have to do counselling about poor job performance'.* (manufacturing)

When family concerns were acknowledged, it was usually connected with women's workforce participation.

> *'People manage around things, although women have a difficult time.'* (insurance)
>
> *'No doubt about it, families affect productivity absenteeism because of family problems, mainly women.'* (public sector)

'Mainly women in clerical positions have difficulties with family responsibilities: clerical staff are always asking to work flexitime.' (business)

Absenteeism

Absenteeism was the area of productivity most affected by family concerns, being mentioned by almost one-third of the companies interviewed (12). One company in the publishing sector found that three days a year on average were lost per parent because of family reasons.

Where family reasons were implicated, it was usually seen to be a woman's problem. Around 25 per cent of women employees questioned in a child care survey in one manufacturing firm said they were late to work or absent sometimes because of child care.

Respondents were clearly aware of differences in the patterns of absenteeism between men and women. For example, a textile manufacturing company had the same absenteeism rates for men and women (5 per cent), but the reasons were different:

'Women would be absent to care for sick children, and men for lifestyle reasons, a day off to do whatever.'

Men in one natural resource company 'take time off to pursue other interests like a hobby farm'. The manager of another manufacturing company that averages five to six days annual absence for non managerial employees said:

'Women would take time off to care for sick children and the men would go to the races.'

Absenteeism related to child care often was not of concern because of the working arrangements of women employees. In some cases, child care needs did not interfere because most workers were 'either young without children or they have older children'. Casual work, rostered days off, part-time work and shift work were seen to 'help' women combine work and family life.

'Not much trouble with absenteeism, most of the workers are mature women with school age children.' (hospital)

'Rostered days off, shifts and annual leave take care of most child care problems.' (manufacturing)

Family concerns were not considered a problem for workers, in some cases, because of the assumption that extended family members would be available if necessary. The manager of one manufacturing company that employed many migrant women said, 'Most often there's a grandmother at home.' Others said:

'In country areas, families tend to look after each other.'

'Some of the husbands work shifts and babysit.'

Mothers in the Institute's Early Childhood Study (Ochiltree and Greenblatt 1991) who were working part-time or casually were more likely to have less difficulty caring for sick children. One-third of parents in the AIFS Family Formation Study (Glezer 1991) mentioned that relatives, mainly grandparents, looked after the children. As described in Chapter One, mothers took more time off work than fathers to care for sick children (Ochiltree and Greenblatt 1991, Glezer 1991).

In all but two cases, absenteeism for family reasons was concentrated below management level. Managers were believed to be able to take the time off when needed to attend to family matters since they were perceived to have more leeway in organising their time.

> *'At the management level, they can work at home sometimes.'* (natural resources)
>
> *'Not a problem at management level, there's more flexibility.'* (business)

Additional examples of why family matters were not seen to affect time at work will be given in the following chapter, which describes how employers respond to workers with family responsibilities.

Recruitment and retention

Family concerns were seen to interfere with other aspects of work, for example, recruitment, relocation and retention of management level workers, particularly at the remote sites of several natural resource companies. Families did not want to relocate or remain in areas that lacked good educational facilities. Distance from extended families caused hardship in some cases, and an absence of job opportunities for wives was a problem in others.

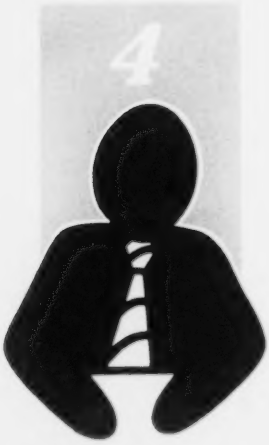
> *'There's some resistance to relocating, probably because of family.'*
>
> *'Kids schooling, spouses career.'*
>
> *'Lack of work for wives is a problem.'*

Some companies were aware of the potential of family needs to disrupt work, particularly if highly skilled women did not return after maternity leave and their investment in training was lost.

> *'When our female professional staff start childbearing, it could be a concern.'* (finance)
>
> *'It might be a problem down the line; three of our managers married recently.'* (business)

Overseas studies report similar situations. In the Canadian study (Paris 1989), one quarter of problems with absenteeism,

tardiness, stress and productivity were attributed to dual work and family roles. Other American studies found that refusals by senior executives to transfer to another location were due to family reasons (Catalyst 1983).



What Employers Do

As described in an earlier section, most surveys of workers with family responsibilities conclude that a significant proportion of women and some men have difficulty balancing the demands of work and family life.

Can a worker afford to take another day off from work to take a toddler to the clinic for immunisation shots? Who can take the time away from work to be at home when the refrigerator repair man comes? Does a manager go to the school play or to a board meeting? How do you fit in time to find a nursing home for an elderly relative? These are the dilemmas confronting workers with family responsibilities and their employers. How employers respond to these situations was a major focus of the survey.

Time Off

Employers were asked what happens in their company if an employee needs time off because of child care problems, to attend to a sick child or other family member, to attend a school function or to other family concerns.

Few respondents differentiated between the types of family needs — child care, family illness or domestic emergency — in terms of how the company would respond. A combination of annual leave, rostered days off, shift times, special leave and sick leave was thought to answer any difficulties with family life that might arise. More than one-third of companies said they offered variations in standard working hours that would be beneficial to workers with family responsibilities. In most of these cases, this

meant the availability of part-time, shift or casual work. For example, 22 respondents said workers would take a rostered day off to attend a school function, 18 indicated annual leave would be used and three said sick leave or special leave might be taken.

> *'They can reorganise rostered days off, or revert to casual work for a while, maybe take annual leave — sometimes unpaid leave can be arranged.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'There's sick leave, annual leave, flexidays, and some unpaid leave can be negotiated.'* (transport)
>
> *'Shift work accommodates most situations.'* (community service)
>
> *'Annual leave or rostered days off would be used for family emergencies.'* (communications)
>
> *'Employees would take annual leave or sick leave, which is generous.'* (manufacturing)

Most companies, 82 per cent (31), assumed workers would use annual leave for any child care problems.

> *'Usually annual leave would be used.'* (insurance)
>
> *'Annual leave would be used for school holidays.'* (manufacturing)

At one food manufacturing company, 'Men and women often ask the manager to assure shift times are fixed so child care can be organised.' A publishing company personnel manager commented, 'Lots of women are casuals and only work a few hours so it works all right.'

Distinctions clearly existed between top-level management or professional staff and down the line clerical, shop and factory floor workers in terms of flexibility in arranging time off from work for family needs.

At the non-management level, when workers needed time off to care for a sick child or spouse, or child care was a problem, approximately one-fifth of companies said supervisors would use their discretion. Decisions would be made on a case by case basis.

> *'No problems, supervisors have excellent rapport with employees and can always accommodate.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'It's no hassle, can be organised, we can accommodate for school holidays if necessary. Managers are aware that they have to give time off for family needs.'* (textile manufacturer)

> *'If a bloke needs time off for a family emergency, he just has to talk to his supervisor.'* (food manufacturer)

Decisions about whether time off was given appeared to be determined in almost all cases by the supervisor's perception of the employee's attitude towards work.

> *'It depends on each supervisor's perception of an employee; a loyal employee, one who has a good record, would be given more leeway.'* (finance)
>
> *'You look at the person, how do they go, are they a good performer, a good team member, not too many sickies, then you give them a go. If they're a good worker, the company does its best.'* (newspaper)
>
> *'Comes down to supervisors. They look at the past record; if the person has a good record, they would be lenient.'* (natural resource company)
>
> *'If a worker comes to me, we can usually arrange time off for a family matter, it's give and take, they usually work back or give an extra hour when it's needed too.'* (food manufacturer)
>
> *'A case of give and take. If employees are hard workers, they benefit in the long run.'* (retail)
>
> *'A good worker would be given reasonable time off; if it is a shirker, the supervisor would think differently. We need to be concerned about productivity.'* (food manufacturer)

Case by case outcomes could include organising the range of leaves provided by an award, for example, annual leave or sick leave. Days off could be on a paid or unpaid basis.

> *'On a case to case basis, some of these days would be paid, others without pay; most people use leave days.'* (communications)
>
> *'Rostering would be able to be arranged for time off during school holidays.'* (hospital)

In the case of a manufacturing company with a large migrant workforce, one company provides an extra two weeks of unpaid leave when a worker goes overseas to visit family on holiday.

There is no mandated leave in Australia for workers to care for sick children and it was rare for a company to state that a worker could take their own sick leave to care for a sick family member. As one manager said about the possibility of mandated leave to care for sick children, 'it would mean less lying about their own sick leave' while another indicated supervisors 'would turn a blind

eye' when employees took their own sick leave to care for a child.

> *'We are sympathetic, most take sick leave, an agreed thing, nothing said.'* (manufacturing)

Several respondents referred to a pool of casual employees that was available to replace workers who needed time off during school holidays or to take care of family members. Companies in the hospitality, health, manufacturing and finance sectors were among those who relied on easily accessible temporary staff. One retail company noted that recent 'downsizing' had created a tight situation that had reduced the leeway formally available to staff.

> *'A large core of temporary clerical staff can fill in if staff need to organise annual leave around school holidays.'* (legal)

> *'A large reserve of casual staff means most leave can be accommodated.'* (hospitality)

At the managerial and professional level, time off for family needs was considered self-regulatory in many situations. More informal flexibility at top levels was possible than at the shop or factory floor, according to one manager of a natural resource company, because 'the work would always get done'. In some cases staff could bring work home or would make up time at weekends and by working late.

> *'At the management level, it is more flexible, could work at home sometimes.'* (insurance)

> *'They (management) would just take the odd day off because most usually work 50–60 hours a week.'* (legal)

Several respondents observed that senior staff would have nannies at home to care for children.

All the private companies interviewed had unpaid maternity leave according to the relevant awards. In one law firm, 'informally, maternity leave is paid for some senior staff and partners get three months paid leave'. Excluding the public service, a few companies had specified paternity leave, but the majority of workers would use annual leave and, in a few cases, special leave.

> *'Two days paid paternity leave is provided outside awards.'* (insurance)

Lower level workers were more often encouraged to revert to casual hours or shift work after maternity leave if they wanted to work fewer hours, whereas reduced hours were able to be organised for management level staff in several circumstances.

Child Care

Child care is often the foremost concern of working parents. The range of child care initiatives that companies can provide has been described elsewhere in this report. A study by Child Care at Work Ltd (Neales 1990) found only 1 per cent of 183 Australian private sector companies surveyed had child care schemes in operation, although 45 per cent indicated support for child care and were investigating options.

Three companies interviewed for this book had child care facilities located on or nearby the premises. One-third of the companies interviewed had conducted surveys or held discussions with specific groups of employees to assess child care needs. A majority of these firms was considering the feasibility of providing some kind of child care. While a number of companies were seriously investigating joint child care ventures with other companies, a number of respondents were less confident this would happen. 'Child care has been discussed, but that's all,' said one respondent.

Several respondents indicated that the results of the surveys had been inconclusive, with employees being unclear about what kind of child care they would use and whether they were willing to pay for the child care if it was offered. In three or four cases, 'the demand was less than expected' or 'little interest was shown'.

These comments suggest that employers may not be considering how the ages of their employees' children affect the type of child care required. One example from the study was a hospital that had a 45-place creche that was used by only two employees. The other places were filled by residents living nearby. As employment was fairly stable, the employees' children had outgrown the creche. School holiday care was now more of a problem.

The cost of work-based child care, unless subsidised by the employer, can also reduce its use by employees on low wages.

> *'Cost of child care is one reason why clerical staff don't return after maternity leave.'* (business)

Child care facilities on the premises have advantages and disadvantages. Advantages for parents include proximity to children in case of illness or emergency, the ability to visit children during work breaks, less travelling time to and from child care centres and more likelihood that centre hours will be in line with working hours (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 1989).

On-site child care, however, may not be the answer for all parents. Some parents prefer family care or community-based care nearer home. Commuting long distances to and from work may not be comfortable for young children and the after school-care of children may be a problem when home and work are not close by (Friedman 1987). Raabe (1990) points out that while

on-site child care may lessen absenteeism due to a breakdown in child care arrangements, absenteeism due to children's illness may be unaffected.

Alternative Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements may vary in the amount of time worked, scheduling of work hours or place of work. Options can include part-time work, job sharing, working at home (telecommuting), compressed work weeks, reduced hours, annual hours contract or flexitimes for starting and stopping work (Christensen and Staines 1990). Child Care At Work Ltd (Neales 1990) found that 40 per cent of companies surveyed allowed flexible hours and 19 per cent had introduced job sharing.

In this study, approximately 10 per cent of women employees worked part-time compared with 0.59 per cent of men. The much smaller proportion of women part-time workers in this survey compared with the general workforce may be explained by the dominance of manufacturing companies in the sample where awards restricted the number of part-time jobs available. Another 19 per cent of women were classified as casual workers compared with 6 per cent of male employees. Contract workers were included in this category.

Although one-third of companies offered part-time work, the definition of what this meant was not always the same. Permanent part-time work, casual work and, in a few cases, job sharing or flexible hours could be covered by this definition. In most cases, the allocation of part-time work was dependent on management discretion and was more often informally than formally arranged. Eligibility was also dependent on award restrictions and job classification.

> *'There's a bit of part-time work, some job sharing, the awards don't allow it.'* (hospitality)

> *'Flexible hours and part-time work are available in a few areas and could be extended if the union would allow it; a couple of people are job sharing.'* (newspaper)

Flexible hours or flexible start and finish times were considered more problematic in the private sector, especially on the factory or sales floor.

> *'We don't need staff here at eight in the morning or six at night when there is no public to serve.'* (marketing)

> *'Flexitime is not suitable for most of the jobs because staff need to be there for clients.'* (computer company)

At the management level:

> *'Managers don't follow time clocks so there is some flexibility.'* (business)

Shift work was fairly common in a cross-section of the companies and seen as a way to accommodate women's family needs. One hospital organised shifts to run six rather than eight hours so that women could 'be home in time to make tea for their family'.

About six companies offered some form of individually-negotiated, short-term reduced hours for management, professional and clerical women returning from maternity leave. Emphasis was on arrangements for skilled employees whose expertise and company experience was valued.

> *'Two senior partners would not have returned after maternity without some reduced hours arranged.'* (legal)

> *'Reduced hours have been organised for clerical staff.'* (legal)

For most women not in professional and management positions, requests for reduced hours after maternity leave would be met by reinstatement in part-time or casual positions. Non-professional staff more frequently returned to part-time work which was 'preferred by mums with kids'. Changes are anticipated once parental leave provisions are implemented in awards.

> *'A range of part-time and shift positions are available for clerical staff to accommodate family responsibilities for women.'* (financial)

> *'Most women return to part-time work, no problem doing this.'* (hospital)

> *'Many of the women transfer to casual work for a while after maternity leave. Up to a certain level it is no problem.'* (hospitality)

The public sector, on the other hand, offered flexitime hours from 8am to 6pm, 12 weeks paid maternity leave, unpaid parental leave and sick leave that could be used for child care.

> *'Good flexitime hours, rostered days off and generous sick and annual leave provisions are the reason there are not many problems.'*

Nevertheless, even in the public service there could be some constraint as expressed by this respondent:

> *'Part-time work is available, but not publicised; it has to be justified.'*

Research on flexible work schedules has suggested that unless the permissible range of working hours is fairly broad and avail-

able for workers that could benefit, the impact may be negligible. In addition, more difficulties are reported when workers operate in teams or the work is based on assembly lines (Christensen and Staines 1990).

Family Leave

Beyond the public service, only one or two companies were even considering any extension of special leave for family or personal reasons beyond what awards provided or were already part of company policy as described earlier. One natural resource company was looking at providing personal rather than sick leave days to accommodate a wider range of needs for leave. Most companies were aware of the parental leave case and waiting to see what effect it would have.

It was clear family-oriented benefits were often considered a privilege rather than a right; employees had to earn family time by performing well at work. Supervisors were the arbiters, judging the situation and rewarding or punishing the employee according to more subjective than objective standards, and with little training in these matters. The absence of 'a lot of written policies' was thought to allow for more flexibility in meeting individual needs.

Raabe and Gessner (1988) point out the difficulty in unravelling the complex policies of workplaces where formal and informal, written and unwritten rules govern, and policies can be actively or passively applied at all or some levels. This difficulty was apparent in the comments of those interviewed in this study.

Other Benefits

It is interesting to look at the comments about providing family-oriented benefits within the context of other incentives to employees. A recent analysis by Russell (1990) of employment advertisements in a daily Sydney newspaper found that the most commonly mentioned benefits were superannuation, cars, annual, sick and long service leave, medical, education and training provisions. While things like superannuation, leaves and medical benefits are important for families, no mention was made of child care, flexible working hours or paid parental leave as incentives for prospective employees.

Employers were asked 'What makes working for your company attractive to your employees, what benefits are considered an incentive to all employees?' A range of 'fringe' benefits was described.

Subsidised canteens (22), recreation or fitness programs (11) and various discounts (10) were most frequently mentioned as benefits provided to all employees.

> *'Lots of employee recognition — overseas trips, vouchers, awards.'* (hospitality)

Manufacturing companies were proud of their clean and light workplaces.

> *'A good clean physical environment, fairly good salary levels, active social club and use of a gym.'*
>
> *'Employees are paid extremely well; excellent working conditions; clean, light, air-conditioned; more automated equipment so less heavy work.'*

Other benefits included career development and training opportunities (10) with fees for relevant courses reimbursed by some companies. A few firms offered housing loans and different kinds of insurance to all employees.

> *'The housing loan, it's the best benefit.'* (financial)

Several companies focused on general work conditions, citing good salaries, stable work and paid superannuation.

> *'High salaries and a good physical working environment.'* (business)
>
> *'A nice environment and a stable company.'* (manufacturing)

Executives generally received salary packages, sometimes cars and school fees paid for children.

> *'Managers get super packages of benefits, unbelievable relocation assistance.'* (natural resources)
>
> *'At senior levels, school fees, club memberships and telephone accounts are subsidised.'* (finance)

Employee Assistance Programs

Counselling on family matters that may interfere with the job, and information and education programs that help workers meet their family responsibilities, can be incorporated into what are usually called employee assistance programs. These are not always recognised as an important family-related benefit that employers can provide.

Employee assistance programs were developed in the United States to reduce absenteeism and accidents related to alcohol or drug abuse. Many companies in the United States have expanded these programs to provide advice, information and referral for personal and family problems that can have a direct or indirect effect on job performance.

Marital and family problems are now reported to be a common difficulty (Jankowski, Holtgraves and Gerstein 1988). One survey of American companies indicated that 94 per cent of the 110 companies with an employee assistance program provided access to marital and family counselling and it was the second most used service after treatment for alcoholism (Kamerman and Kahn 1987).

Programs can be in-house, staffed by counsellors connected to human resource, medical and occupational health sections, or contracted to outside agencies that provide services reimbursed in full or in part by the company or health insurance.

As in the United States, a number of consulting services have been set up in Australia that offer contracted counselling services to companies. Services are usually free to employees. Indrad Services, in Western Australia, estimates that around 45 per cent of its counselling is on marital and family issues.

More than one-third of companies in this study offered some form of employee assistance program, either an in-house psychologist, counselling within an occupational health section, or referral to an organisation that provided counselling. Several companies were members of the Interchurch Trade and Industry Mission, an organisation that provides services to approximately 100 companies around Australia.

Personnel administrators often saw counselling employees as their role. Although there was an awareness that marital and family problems sometimes interfered with productivity, most of the solutions were informal such as giving the worker a day off 'to sort out the problems'. Referral to counselling would usually be related to discussions about job performance when employees were reviewed.

Employee assistance programs can extend beyond traditional counselling. Several of the managers interviewed referred to 'wellness and fitness' programs. 'Quit' smoking and stress management seminars were mentioned by several companies.

Unlike the United States, where lunch-hour seminars on family topics are becoming more popular, only one Australian company interviewed had held a lunchtime talk on parenting.

Bringing About Change

Most people think of employee benefits along the line of traditional holiday, sick leave, and the fringe benefits described previously. Few of these benefits are designed to meet the needs of workers attempting to balance work and family. Benefit packages, according to Friedman and Gray (1989) were developed for the 'typical' worker assumed to be a married, male breadwinner. She argues that benefits must be re-examined to consider changes in the composition of the workforce and be redesigned to include components that are supportive of families. The provision of child care, parental leaves and leave to care for sick children could be considered as well as family counselling and educational seminars.

Of interest is how often dependent care and other family-oriented policies are being referred to as 'the employee benefit of the 90s' (*Transition* 1990, Friedman and Gray 1989).

Nevertheless, given the economic climate of 1991, changes in benefits to families are not likely to be instituted for altruistic reasons. Even when companies would like to be more supportive, bottom-line returns on the cost would have to be demonstrated.

> *'Productivity, it's always the bottom line.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'Increased profits would be necessary for anything outside of mandatory benefits.'* (retail)

Referring to requests for shorter working days by women employees in a manufacturing firm, a senior manager said:

> *'We would do it more frequently if there was a shortage of labour and we needed the workers'.*

And in relation to child care:

> *'Child care would be considered if we needed to keep senior women.'* (natural resource)

Nearly 80 per cent (31) of the companies interviewed would introduce additional family benefits like sick child care or parental leave when legislation or changes in awards makes it mandatory.

> *'We will confront the impact of parental leave when we have to.'* (manufacturing)

Only 19 federal awards allow for leave for family emergencies or the use of sick leave for family purposes (ACTU 1989). Maternity leave was linked to provisions in awards in most cases.

Pressure on the part of employees for additional benefits could influence company policy, according to 11 respondents.

> *'Middle management women are not making demands to restructure jobs to make them more accommodating to family life.'* (hospital)

> *'There's no pressure from employees for additional benefits.'* (newspaper)

> *'There is a surprisingly high rate of return after maternity leave.'* (finance)

> *'Office staff come back early after maternity leave because of financial reasons.'* (business)

Approximately one-quarter of the companies believed competition with other companies, especially for highly skilled workers, would be an incentive. The same proportion of companies referred to government tax incentives as a way to increase the benefits offered.

> *'Don't want to get too far ahead of the game in terms of competition to lose the profit edge.'* (insurance)

> *'If trends in other companies show the way, we would be ahead if we see the need to.'* (manufacturing)

Resistance at the senior level was identified by more than two-thirds of respondents (27) as an obstacle to changing the way companies provided benefits to workers with family responsibilities.

> *'Management does not see the connection between productivity and these kinds of benefits.'* (natural resource)

> *'Management generally feels it is not our problem, the main concern is productivity, not families.'* (manufacturing)

Fairly frequently, it was noted that senior management men held traditional values about families and repeatedly it was stated that 'few managers have wives that work'. Women at management level, if married, often did not have children and if they did, were thought to have nannies.

> *'It's a conservative organisation, haven't got that far yet.'* (legal)

> *'We have traditional managers who don't think company should be involved.'* (natural resource)

Several personnel managers suggested attitudes would change as the professional and management staff had children. For example, one respondent remarked of two male colleagues, 'Now that they have to pick up children from child care, they are becoming more understanding.'

Most of the natural resource and manufacturing companies indicated they had few women in senior management. A glance at several of the annual reports of these companies showed no women pictured in senior or board of management positions. In 1989, only 24 per cent of managers and administrators in Australia were women (ABS *Labour Force 1990*).

Others reflected that attitudes would change as more women professionals had children and their skills were needed. For example, job sharing might become possible. One natural resource company said that the impetus for establishing its child care centre and offering part-time work was a desire to retain women executives who would have left the company if these options were not available. Another natural resource company said, 'We'll do whatever is necessary to keep skilled staff.'

For a food manufacturing company, the fact that a fairly high proportion of clerical workers did not return from maternity leave 'was not a problem because they are easily replaced'. In another company, additional benefits would be considered 'only if needed for labour supply, and that's not a problem'.

Corporate Culture

Additional comments, however, pointed to more fundamental issues of corporate culture permeating management decisions. Perceptions about the roles of men and women and the dichotomy that should exist between work and family life clearly influence how decisions are made, not just hard 'bottom-line' calculations.

To ascertain where families fit into the world of work, employers were asked 'What is the company's attitude towards women working, and men and women sharing work and family responsibilities?' and 'Would people who want to get ahead in their jobs or careers be expected to spend less time with their family?'

Without hesitation, all but two of the companies saw the rising number of two-income families, or more specifically, women

working, as an accepted fact of life. This acceptance was often couched in terms of families needing two incomes to survive today.

> *'No problem at all with both people working.'* (business)
>
> *'It's a fact, have to live nowadays.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'It's a fact of life, can't survive on one wage.'* (public sector)
>
> *'Women work because the family needs the second income — for school fees and things.'* (manufacturing)

Despite this awareness and seeming acceptance that workers are likely to have family responsibilities, in one-quarter of companies, respondents admitted employees were expected to put the job first. For some there was an acceptance, but 'not an awareness of the nitty-gritty barriers'.

> *'If you really want to move up you are expected to be here and to be seen early and late.'* (transport)
>
> *'Managers wouldn't usually give family reasons for changing schedules or taking time off.'* (natural resources)
>
> *'Family is all right as long as it doesn't interfere too often.'* (natural resources)

There was some hesitancy as those interviewed tried to express their company's honest attitudes. Nearly one-half of the companies compromised by saying the job would be expected to come first 'at times in your career'.

> *'In some areas, yes, it's not a verbalised thing, but the job would come first. I have turned down a Saturday discussion because I wanted to do something with my kids. I took a few hours off last week to go to a school recital. It's okay if they know you do the right thing.'* (newspaper)
>
> *'My wife would probably say it does come first, but the company does try to get people to balance their lives, very definitely. It's in the stress management courses.'* (business)

As for refusing transfers for family reasons, in one company 'you are not exactly punished, but you are not promoted'.

Further illustrations of how work and family are assumed to operate can be found in responses to the question, 'To perform the job satisfactorily, would workers usually have to work early, late, on weekends, travel etc.?'

Excluding shift workers, non-managerial workers would normally not work outside regulated hours. Employers were interested in limiting overtime for award workers to avoid paying penalty rates. The point was made that overtime work was usually in demand from workers eager to earn extra pay, and was seldom involuntary.

> *'We wouldn't force office staff to work extra time if there are family problems, we would get in a temporary.'* (business)

Conversely, more than two-thirds of respondents agreed that management and professional staff would work additional hours, take work home and come in early and late fairly regularly. Almost one-third of companies would require management staff to attend several days of training or development meetings away from the office once or twice a year. Some amount of travel would be expected of employees in one-half of the companies.

> *'It happens, men complain their wives say they are never at home.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'It is still good to be seen at your desk after 5 o'clock. Yes, meetings are arranged at 6pm or 7.30am.'* (insurance)
>
> *'I don't want to say it, but it's true, bums on seats count.'* (natural resources)

Management in one retail company is encouraging a 'work smart, not longer' policy but an attitude of 'in early, out late' still persists.

Public service employees were not exempt from working long hours:

> *'Very definitely, the corporate culture, women are forced to buy it too.'*

A more moderate stance was taken by this natural resource company:

> *'Working late or long hours isn't going to impress anybody, but you have to meet budgets and deadlines.'*

Some companies prided themselves on being family-oriented. This was especially true in the few companies still controlled and run by a family.

> *'This company is very strong on families — time off for families is recognised. Best company in the world for families.'* (food manufacturer)

A realistic attitude was apparent in the comment of a personnel manager in the hospitality industry:

> *'Family would not be allowed to interfere with the job in general, but there is sympathy to real family emergencies. When put to the test, the company will do the right thing.'*

These responses reflect the attitude that time off for family matters has to be earned. To some extent a process of 'give and take' emerges with employers willing to accommodate the family needs of workers so long as they don't interfere with getting the job done. As one general manager affirmed, 'no one minds the odd phone call home'. Nevertheless, there seemed to be a higher tolerance for emergencies than daily dilemmas.

> *'Work comes first; if you couldn't organise your family life over time, your prospects would suffer.'* (natural resource)

> *'We expect them to manage their family lives, we do have to make a profit, we do what we can, sometimes gets abused.'* (food manufacturer)

> *'One senior manager did reduce her hours for a while after maternity leave, but she managed the workload very well.'* (business)

A more forthright statement than many was made by this manager of a natural resource company:

> *'The company will always have the balance in trade-offs between company and family life. We are not a family support agency.'*

Employers were asked to define a successful worker, what counted towards recognition and promotion. In almost one-half of the companies, meeting agreed- upon performance standards was the measure for professional and managerial staff. Other criteria included getting the job done, loyalty, being a team person and, for management, taking the initiative.

Benefits of Family-Oriented Policies

Most companies are interested in the cost-benefits of providing family supports for workers. In general, benefits for companies are considered to include reduced absenteeism, improved recruitment and retention of women employees, reduced training costs, improved morale and reduced stress leading to increased productivity (Fernandez 1986, Friedman 1987, Catalyst 1989, Childcare At Work Ltd 1989, Galinsky and Stein 1990).

Examples of the cost-benefits to employers have been reported in literature on work and family-related issues. For example, in the United States, Merck and Co. reports its flexitime option has increased productivity up to 20 per cent in some departments and that the provision of a six-month parental leave saves $12 000 in

training new employees. Intermedics Incorporated found that its child care centre reduced turnover by 23 per cent and absenteeism dropped 15 000 hours. Transamerica's sick child care program is reported to save the company $165 000 per year in avoiding parental absence (Paris 1989). Nyloncraft, an automotive parts manufacturing firm, attributed its reduced turnover rate (from 57 per cent to 37 per cent over a 10-year period) to the provision of an on site child care centre (Pati 1991).

A Canadian study of 385 corporations (Paris 1989) concluded that of the 80 per cent of companies that did offer alternative work arrangements, about half perceived them to be effective in reducing absenteeism, and 60 per cent thought this flexibility increased productivity. An American study of flexible staffing and scheduling arrangements (Christensen 1989) found flexitime increased employee morale and decreased the rate of absenteeism and coming late. A similar study, though limited to managers and professional staff, mentioned positive effects on retention and morale (Catalyst 1990).Case studies of 16 British companies and local councils (Berry-Lound 1990) concluded the main benefits of introducing 'family-friendly' policies were the retention of women employees and an improved image as a caring employer.

The chairman of ESSO Australia claims the proportion of women employees returning after maternity leave increased from below 50 per cent to 80 per cent after company child care centres were introduced, saving at least $100 000 in training a new employee (Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Women and Work* 1990). The Office of the Status of Women (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1989) estimated the annual saving in reduced absenteeism and turnover of women employees for employers providing child care to be $87 000 for a 40-place centre. The introduction of job sharing reduced training costs by more than $8000 per person by increasing the retention rate of women workers with children at Berrivale Orchards Ltd, a citrus processing plant in South Australia (Department of Industrial Relations 1988).

Employers were asked, 'What do you see as the benefits or impact of introducing family supports for workers?' Overall, respondents were fairly general and reserved in their answers, reflecting that they were more aware of the effect on work than the family.

> *'There must be some benefits — a happier workforce.'* (communications)

Retention of skilled workers, a more productive workforce and improved morale were the most common responses.

> *'Keeping valuable skilled staff, particularly since most of the staff work five to seven years before they take maternity leave and they know the organisation.'* (business)

Meeting affirmative action goals, reduced absenteeism and the recruitment of a skilled workforce were also mentioned.

> *'We accept that statistics talk and women are a major workforce resource.'* (natural resources)

> *'Would be useful in meeting affirmative action.'* (manufacturing)

A few employers admitted that the relationship between work and family had not been recognised.

> *'Haven't thought much about who should be responsible or pay the costs. Don't hear much about families.'* (natural resources)

> *'Not really aware of family as an employee issue.'* (natural resources)

Only one or two companies had actually conducted a cost-benefit analysis, and this was limited to the provision of child care. In one case, the provision of child care combined with the introduction of part-time work after maternity leave was calculated to have saved the company $100 000 in recruitment and training costs through the retention of two highly skilled professional employees.

Although the respondents in this study had fairly little to say specifically about the benefits of introducing family-oriented policies, their answers to other questions about how they handle family needs imply they are more aware of the situation than might be imagined.

Constraints to Introducing Family Benefits

Economic costs were cited by three-quarters (28) of the companies as the main reason for not introducing work-based child care. Multiple work sites would add to these costs for several companies.

> *'Cost would be a problem.'* (manufacturing)

> *'Too expensive.'* (manufacturing)

In contrast to the results of some other surveys (Jackson 1991, Child Care At Work Ltd 1989), none of the companies interviewed claimed that difficulties with government regulations and rules impeded the establishment of a child care facility.

Even with government assistance, companies may find the establishment of on-site centres too expensive, particularly when their operations are scattered over several locations. The costs of providing on-site child care centres will vary with the price of land, existing facilities, the age mix of children, staff levels and hours of operation. An analysis by the Office of the Status of

Women (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1989) estimated a 40-place centre would cost $269 000 to establish and $298 200 to operate. The St Georges Building Society in Sydney established a 40-place child care centre that cost $300 000 to build and $45 000 to furnish.

Cost was not the only constraint to introducing child care. Several managers (six) alluded to company attitudes towards benefits such as child care and parental leaves, suggesting that these were not really the company's concern.

> *'Child care is considered an individual responsibility.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'Management still not aware of family as an employee issue.'* (natural resource)

These attitudes were often attributed to senior managers who were of the 'traditional' school of thinking.

> *'Management does not see the connection between productivity and these types of benefits.'* (natural resource)
>
> *'Still traditional managers who don't think the company should be involved.'* (natural resource)
>
> *'None of the senior managers have working wives.'* (legal)

Financial costs were also given as the main reason why benefits such as sick child leave and paid maternity and parental leaves were not offered.

Characteristics of the job and union award restrictions were the most common barriers to offering alternative working arrangements such as flexible hours and job sharing. Administrative hassles, making sure that supervisors were available to cover working hours, organising time schedules and covering for absent workers were obstacles to introducing more flexible hours.

For some companies, the demands of the production process were not seen as conducive to more flexible working hours for individuals.

> *'It (flexitime) is not controllable — you need cover age by supervisors and safety officers — the others depend on everyone being there.'* (textile manufacturing)
>
> *'Sometimes there are only one or two people who can do the job; it is difficult to get work done if one is not there.'* (manufacturing)

The fear that company clients would be resistant to changed ways of working with staff was mentioned by business firms.

> *'Clients expect the person working on their account to be there every day, all the time.'* (legal)

In a few cases, reluctance stemmed from management fears that workers without family responsibilities would object on equity grounds — claiming that such concessions were unfair because they only benefited certain workers. Such views reflect a narrow approach that does not consider the diverse needs of families for different kinds of benefits at different stages.

> *'There have been complaints when time off was given.'* (manufacturing)

Only one or two respondents expressed opinions that providing more formalised benefits like sick leave for child care would result in abuse of the privilege.

> *'It would be abused; the more you do, the more they take.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'How would you be sure both parents aren't* taking parental leave?' (community services)

Studies of flexible staffing and work arrangements in American corporations (Christensen 1989, Catalyst 1989) reported similar management attitudes.

When employers were asked, 'Where would family problems be raised within the company?' more than 90 per cent indicated at the management/personnel level, with a few saying the equal opportunity officer. Supervisors, however, were seen to be the people with whom employees would raise concerns and make requests.

Despite the responsibility of supervisors in deciding whether to allow workers time off for family reasons with or without pay, only three companies said that issues related to work and family were raised at management or training seminars and meetings.

One textile manufacturing company was investing time and money in management training programs to improve its sensitivity to employee concerns, including family matters, that could affect productivity. Women workers in this company were believed to be uncomfortable discussing family needs with their supervisors and so just took days off or left the company rather than try to organise time off. The aim of the program was to 'convert unplanned time off' so that the workload could be reorganised to continue more efficiently. Supervisors were being encouraged to 'ask how their child was feeling' when employees returned to work after sick leave had been arranged.

Who Should Be Responsible?

Demographic and social changes have raised the vexatious question of who is to be responsible for the cost and benefits of investing in workers with family responsibilities. Kanter (1977) has asked the question, 'What is the responsibility of the institutions in which work takes place for the personal and familial

consequences of work conditions and work arrangements?' The ILO Convention 156 clearly advocates a shared responsibility between governments, employers, and the community to provide the supports so that workers with family responsibilities and their workplaces can function at an optimum.

The majority of employers surveyed (75 per cent), when asked 'Who should be responsible for the provision of family benefits?' said 'shared between government, employees and employers'.

> *'If there are cost benefits to employers, they should contribute heavily to the costs of these benefits, but employees must also make trade offs between work and leisure and hours and pay.'* (natural resources)
>
> *'Tax incentives would be necessary as costs should be shared with the Government.'* (hospitality)
>
> *'Government would have to provide the incentives for child care.'* (retail)

The remaining felt either employees or the Government should be responsible.

> *'Employees would have to pay their share, companies are being asked to do too much.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'The community should pay for it, not the employer.'* (manufacturing)
>
> *'Families have to take responsibility for children. We expect them to manage their family lives, we do have to make a profit.'* (manufacturing)

6

Rights Versus Privilege

This qualitative survey of employer perceptions of workers with family responsibilities has revealed an ambivalent attitude about the connections between work and family life, and what employer responsibilities should be.

While most employers recognised the demands and frequent difficulties of balancing dual roles as worker and family caretaker, there was an implicit belief that this was a dilemma mainly for women workers. Where changes in family- oriented work practices or benefits were being considered, it was seen as a way to improve the retention or recruitment of highly trained women, not necessarily as a way to enable workers of either sex to balance their work and family obligations with less conflict and tension.

Women, not men, were regarded as the beneficiaries of part-time and casual work that could be arranged around the demands of child or elder care. Alternative work schedules were, however, more often assessed in terms of their cost-saving benefits to employers in meeting off peak production demands, or managing overtime and penalty rates.

It was clear that a fair amount of discretionary and flexible time off exclusive of formal policies was allowed. However, where family leave benefits were available beyond the provisions specified in an industrial award or legislation, they were considered an earned privilege rather than an employee's right. Supervisors, not workers, decided whether leave was necessary or possible.

A dichotomy exists between professional and management level employees and those workers covered by awards in non-

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managerial positions. It was assumed that managerial staff worked extended hours and could therefore take time off when needed on the understanding that the work would still be done regardless. Somersaults would be turned to retain highly valued and skilled workers. On the other hand, professional and more senior positions were not considered conducive to part-time or reduced hours because the work could not be accomplished. Family responsibilities were considered more problematic at this level because of the extensive amounts of time and energy required beyond fixed working hours and time clocks.

Non-management workers were subject to a supervisor's agreement that time off was essential and possible outside of the casual and part-time work available within the bounds of awards. Most of these jobs were not considered on the same career track as management and professional positions. Whereas unorthodox working time arrangements were organised for specialised and highly valued staff, a fair amount of informal flexitime was provided to award workers if they had rapport with their supervisor.

Although most employers acknowledged the importance of families and were not insensitive to the needs of workers with family responsibilities, there was some ambivalence about whether the company could meet family needs while maintaining its productivity. In a few cases, however, employers specifically recognised that productivity was tied to the provision of family-oriented policies.

Corporate values, on the whole, were still based on the premise that work and family lives were separate worlds. Family needs were accommodated but this was often due to pressure from government, unions or workers rather than a belief that men and women should be able to participate equally in paid work and family care.

The corporate world explored in this survey was still largely a traditional man's domain and standards of work behavior and career advancement were basically shaped by the assumption that there was someone else to take care of all family and non work responsibilities. Reluctance on the part of employers to initiate or expand family-oriented policies stemmed from several sources. One was confusion about who should be responsible for the consequences of changes in the social and economic forces affecting the workplace and workers. Another was entrenched beliefs about the roles of men and women and the economics of running a company.

Benefits provided to employees have different interpretations. The media report complaints from companies about contributions to WorkCare and other non wage costs such as holiday pay, long service leave and other paid absences. While benefits that may improve the situation for workers with family responsibilities are frequently the focal point of concern, entertainment allowances, cars, and club fees are often seen as incentives in

attracting and retaining prized employees.

Objections on the grounds of equity to providing specific benefits to only some workers, in this case child care or parental leave, are considered specious by researchers, who point out that many benefits now provided are inequitably distributed — for example, cars, executive cafeterias, retirement funds and, for that matter, salaries. Friedman and Gray (1989) observe that compensation and benefit packages need to be re-examined since they were developed for the 'typical' model of the male breadwinner. Major American companies are opting for 'flexible benefits' or 'cafeteria' plans as a way to ensure that all employees receive some advantages (Neales, *Financial Review*, 4 April 1990.)

But Kamerman and Kahn (1987), although referring to essential medical, disability, and maternity benefits, observed that the 'corporate welfare system' in the United States would collapse without extensive tax subsidies. Their survey of several hundred large and small businesses revealed that most employers would provide job-protected leave benefits for parenting after birth only when demanded by law. The majority of employers interviewed in one Canadian survey (Paris 1989) indicated that employees have the primary responsibility for solving family problems associated with work.

The power of legislative mandate is reinforced by the comment of one employer in Sweden where parental leave provisions are extremely generous: 'There aren't any problems because one has no choice; the law is clear that people have to be allowed to take leave' (Rapoport and Moss 1989). Kamerman and Kahn (1987) emphasise that innovative work schedules can only be explored where there is a 'safety net' of health, disability, income, child care and leave benefits that are not tied to full-time employment. Otherwise benefits are discretionary and may be available only to those who work in large companies and have needed skills.

A Shared Social Dilemma

Resolving the conundrum of meeting work and family responsibilities is ultimately a societal problem, one that must be shared by government, employers and families (Kammerman and Kahn 1987, Rapoport and Moss 1989). The dilemma is bound up in assumptions about men's and women's roles, the values associated with paid and unpaid work and how to care for children, the elderly and the sick.

If a community accepts the premise, as in Sweden, that women and men are expected to participate equally in employment, nurturing of children and home duties, then resources will be made available to achieve this. Family supports such as maternity, paternity and parental leave, flexible working hours, adequate child care facilities, and reduced working hours will be introduced without penalty to job security or career advancement.

Employers, too, would not be penalised economically for employing workers with family responsibilities.

Moss (1990), discussing child care in Britain, aptly sums up this philosophy: 'The availability and quality of services should be determined by the needs of children, and not according to how badly an employer requires the services of a child's parents.' Presser (1989) raises the question of whether as a community we can make time for children and are willing to pay the price. 'Do we want parents to spend more time with children — fathers as well as mothers — when they are infants and toddlers?' Are 'we willing to subsidise employers' policies that permit more parental time with children?' (p.538). One should add here, 'and the elderly or ill'.

Rapoport and Moss (1989) state that no attempt has been made in Sweden to examine the costs and benefits of parental leave and other provisions. Swedish employers pay a levy equal to 2 per cent of their payroll as their contribution to government funded local child care facilities (Moss 1990). It is believed that if parents have sufficient time with their children and are free from worry at work knowing that adequate child care is available, then the company and the community will benefit from improved productivity.

If men and women are to share in the rewards of family life and paid work, then ingrained and stereotyped views of their roles will have to be overcome through education promoting equality in all areas. Difficult decisions have to be made about what family and job or career goals and roles individuals are destined to fulfil. Beliefs about whose responsibility it is to care for children, the sick and the elderly affect women's and men's motivation, aspirations and investment in education and training.

Several employee studies conducted by Australian banks and insurance companies (Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment 1990) found that women had lower career aspirations than men. As one respondent in this study said, 'Women leave at middle management level; they don't want more responsibility.' Changes in award restructuring and training that seek to improve the conditions of women in low skilled and low paid jobs will only be effective if women see paid work as a lifetime proposition and adequate supports for this choice are available.

As well as education in the schools, unions and employers in Sweden receive financial support for this kind of education. Some companies in Sweden provide classes in the domestic arts of cooking and child care for men employees who may have missed out on such experiences during their early years (Nasman and Falkenberg 1989, Rapoport and Moss 1989). Lindbloom (1986), commenting on Swedish family policy, observes, 'If each spouse is to make an equal effort towards his/her education and occupation, then each will have to equally share in the care and stimulation of the children as well as the housework.' Participation in caring in the wider community should be added to this

statement. Even in Sweden however, the philosophy of gender equality has not always been translated into practice (Haas 1990).

The corporate view

Corporate culture and organisation could adopt different standards of career advancement to include other than full time, overtime, and uninterrupted patterns of working. The workplace could no longer be structured as though workers did not have families or, if they did, that there was a spouse at home to take care of all domestic responsibilities.

Greenhaus (1988) asserts, 'At the most basic level, an organisation should expand its conception of what it takes to be a "successful" employee in its environment.' Pleck (1985) makes the point that there is no getting around the fact 'that men who participate and are directly involved in their families must be, on the average, less productive and ambitious in paid work' (p318). The same would have to apply to women.

For example, a recent study of flexible working arrangements for managers and professionals in 50 American companies (Catalyst 1989) reported that these employees were able to maintain their productivity because they continued to put in additional time beyond the agreed upon part time hours, and were able to modify their schedules to 'meet pressing business needs of the organisations'. Many of the women in this study needed full time child care so they could be available to attend meetings, work extra hours or respond to changes in their schedules.

Schwartz (1989), referring to paternity leave in the United States, states that men know 'management will see such behavior as a lack of career commitment even when company policy permits parental leave for men'. Even in Sweden with its generous parental leave schemes and promotion of equal responsibility between men and women caring for the family, 50 per cent of women work part time while there is some suggestion that in Norway and Sweden, women are discouraged from taking on higher level work when extensive parental leave is contemplated (Kallberg and Rosenfeld 1990).

Reviewing flexible staffing arrangements, Fyock (1989) reinforces the opinion that alternative work schedules would be of most benefit to women. 'Consider the woman, starting her family, who now wants time at home to be with young children — or perhaps the woman who cannot find appropriate child care arrangements for her children.'

Epstein (1989) discusses how conceptual and structural boundaries act as 'constraints to change' in the workplace: '. . . there are rules which guide and regulate traffic, and they instruct on the conditions under which boundaries may be crossed'. These boundaries define the roles of men and women at home and at work, and influence decisions at the personal and corporate level. It helps to explain why equal opportunity and affirmative action

policies take a long time to achieve their goals.

This employer study highlights the importance of improved education and training for managers and supervisors, so they are well equipped with the information and strategies to handle any work and family situations that arise. Managers and supervisors need to be informed about company policies that support family-oriented practices so they can respond in an objective rather than subjective manner. Responding to work and family concerns must be seen as a legitimate part of a supervisor's role if employees are to feel the workplace is supportive. The reliance on the ideology of senior management or the attitudes of supervisors to implement family oriented policies has been confirmed in this survey and others (Aldous 1990).

Few communities are as unambivalent as Sweden, however, and consensus on what work and family policies to promote is still hard to reach. As Edgar (1990) says, we give mixed messages. Women are encouraged to enter the workforce to become economically independent and men are exhorted to become more involved in child care and family tasks. Yet we do not provide the structural changes in the workplace or community supports to accommodate such joint responsibilities. This is the reason for the debates in Australia on the provision of parental leave, the funding of child care, and aspects of award restructuring.

The community view

The language of industrial reform in Government documents such as *Labour Market Reform: Industrial Relations Agenda* (Department of Industrial Relations 1988), suggests sympathy for the concerns of workers with family responsibilities. For example, 'The ability to adjust working time arrangements and the identification and removal of restrictive work and management practices are important.' But although there is recognition that 'the usual economic measures need to be complemented by consideration of the human and social dimensions of the workforce that will, in the longer term, have a crucial bearing on the organisation's productivity and performance ... (p.39)', attention is directed mainly to job redesign and classification. Pope and Alston (1989) make the association between raising the skill and quality of the nation's human resources not only through training and schooling but in 'improved health and home investments in the form of care of children in preschool years (p.2)'.

The Confederation of Australian Industry, an employer association, in arguing for more flexibility in working hours through changes in award and penalty rates (CAI 1988), cites the example that married women with children might prefer casual hours, weekend and shift work so a spouse can mind the children.

The possible negative effect on families of casual hours, shift work, weekend work, three days of 12-hour shifts, two weeks on and one week off, 24-hour shifts and the effect of alternative work

patterns on career paths are not discussed. Shift work has been found to interfere with the amount of time spouses can spend together as a family and participate in family and social activities (Simon 1990). Nor are the more positive initiatives such as built in career breaks, updating of skills on return from leave, reduced hours, phase backs after parental leave or the protected benefits mentioned.

A survey conducted for the Business Council of Australia (Industrial Relations Study Commission 1989) on management practices and attitudes toward certain key industrial issues did not address any specific work and family concerns. Taking days off when not sick and coming to work late were recorded as 'incidences of shirking and restrictive work behavior'. No mention was made that these instances might be related to family matters such as caring for a sick child or getting a child to daycare. Since 82 per cent of the workers at the 341 sites selected for the survey were men, these considerations may not have been thought pertinent.

Business leaders have recently been reported in the media advocating the abolition of rostered days off, reduced paid holidays and shorter annual leave in the name of increasing productivity (Forbes 1990). There is little recognition of how time away from work can enhance the quality of family life, which in turn can affect employee productivity. (The accompanying picture showed men playing golf on their rostered day off; one can guess where women would be found on their rostered day off.)

The Commonwealth's submission to the 1989 Review of the Structural Efficiency Principle links industries' need to be competitive with award restructuring that includes flexible forms of work organisation, incentive to upgrade skills and job reclassification. However, the emphasis on 'efficiency and productivity' is tempered by reference to equity issues. It cautions against employers relying on casual, temporary, or contract labour to achieve efficiency goals as this could lead to a 'periphery' workforce unless tied to training and entry into the 'core' workforce.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training (1989) warns that the service industries (insurance, banking, retail), which employ the majority of women workers, are creating a 'contingency' workforce based on casual and less skilled jobs associated with increased automation and franchising. Where a 'core/periphery' model operates, core workers have job stability and benefits while 'Cinderella jobs' (Beechey and Perkins 1987), are usually excluded from benefits, training opportunities and can be hired or fired categorically (Dawkins and Norris 1990).

The federal Department of Employment, Education and Training established an 'education for girls' policy and funded a 'girls in maths and science' program to encourage girls to enter non traditional careers and reduce occupational segregation. The same emphasis on encouraging boys to enhance their skills and to take on 'caring' jobs in the workforce or at home is less evident.

Award restructuring and multi-skilling, phrases on the industrial relations agenda, are important to women and men in improving job status, work organisation and design. What is missing, however, is the connection between raising the skill and quality of employees with increased attention to work organisation, and practices that incorporate the necessary 'family paths' of workers with family responsibilities. When taking time off from work is considered 'shirking' without any reference to possible family circumstances, we can see there is a long way to go before the community reaches consensus on the role of family members and the role of employees.

These examples illustrate the continuing corporate, bureaucratic and community ambivalence on the relationship between work and family life. The next decade will see continued discussion about the fundamental questions of equity and equality between men and women and the optimum conditions for the development of children and a caring community. There will be debate over balancing corporate productivity with social justice. The answers will determine what mix and types of public and private supports, and entitlements for families at home and in the workplace, will be available.

Making a Start

Development of a comprehensive and coherent work and family policy.

A number of government departments and committees are addressing work and family issues, as described in earlier sections of this paper e.g. the Women's Bureau, the Office of the Status of Women, the Affirmative Action Agency, the Work and Family Unit. There is not, however, a sense of overall planning. Duplication of efforts occurs. Increased coordination between agencies is required to ensure that a comprehensive plan of research and action is developed and implemented. For this to happen, government has to be clearer about its goals in relation to workers with family responsibilities. What does it believe and want to achieve? How are its goals best achieved? Ratification of ILO Convention 156 by the Federal Government may be a step in the right direction.

Redefining work and family issues as a community concern, not a women's issue.

The question is how to enable men and women to gain 'equality of opportunity' (Moss 1990), to participate in employment, to contribute to their economic wellbeing, and to care for family members and the wider community.

Increasing men's involvement in work and family.

Education in the broad sense must prepare young men and women for their dual roles of working and caring. Promotion of women's access to education, training and employment must be balanced by men's increasing responsibility for caring roles within the family and the community.

Changing the corporate culture.

The assumption that work and family are separate worlds must be replaced by a belief that workers are not only employees but family caretakers too. How the working day and career paths are organised must reflect the dual responsibilities of workers. Policies that support positive, family-oriented decisions need to be clearly defined and promulgated at the management and supervisory levels. Management education should incorporate information and training to increase sensitivity to work and family issues, and strategies to resolve these concerns.

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Appendix

AIFS Questionnaire Employer Response to Work and Family Issues

Title of Person Interviewed _____

Company _____

Industry Sector _____

Number of Employees _____
Male _____ Female _____

Major Awards _____

General Business Concerns

1. What do you see as the critical human resource/employee issues now and in the next few years for your company/industry? (more flexible workforce, meeting industrial relations, EEO regulations)

2. Does the company have any difficulties with:
recruitment (of skilled employees)
turnover (retention of skilled workers)
relocation
absenteeism
coming late, leaving early
hours of work, shift work
stress

For each of these concerns, are they major or minor issues?

Do these problems differ for men, for women workers? At which job or position level?

3. Do you think that family concerns interfere with productivity at work (child care problems, marital problems, caring for sick family members)?

If yes, in what ways does it affect productivity (absenteeism, safety, concentration, ability to take on extra work)?

Are they major/minor? Different for men/women? At all/some position levels?

Employer Response

4. What happens in your firm/company if an employee needs time off for:
   maternity leave (women)
   paternity leave (men)
   problems with child care
   time off to care for sick children, partner, elderly relative
   time to attend school functions
   time to deal with marital/domestic/personal concerns

Is the response different for professional/other staff? For men/women?

5. Have you done any surveys of employees? Of managers? about job satisfaction/dissatisfaction in general about needs of workers with family responsibilities

6. What current policies, benefits does the company consider as incentives to all employees? What makes working for your company attractive to workers? For example:recreation/fitness facilities, canteen, medical/dental costs, school fees.

Are these available to all employees? Which job classifications? What criteria apply?

7. What, if any, policies have changed/are being considered/developed/implemented specifically related to workers with family responsibilities?
   child care assistance (on-site, off-site, information/referral, fee subsidies, school holiday programs)
   maternity leave — paid/unpaid
   parental leave
   special family leave (for short-term emergencies, school visits)
   flexible working hours
   part-time work with/without pro rata benefits
   reduced hours after maternity leave
   job sharing
   career break schemes (skills updating, on-going contact after maternity leave)
   employee assistance programs (family counselling)
   seminars on managing family and work life
   sick child care leave
   leave to care for elderly, sick relatives
   elder care information, referral
   relocation assistance

In relation to each option, would these be available for: all employees? Which job classifications, levels, positions? What criteria e.g. seniority, at the discretion of management, as a formal policy?

8. What do you see as the benefits/impact of introducing each of these supports for workers?

9. How have the positive or negative benefits been evaluated? Any cost-benefit analysis done? For which options?

Policy

10. What are/would be the constraints to introducing benefits to assist workers with family responsibilities? For example:
- economic costs
- unions (penalty rates)
- company does not believe it is its responsibility
- management is reluctant
- equity issues — other workers would consider it unfair
- administrative hassles

Specifically in relation to:
- parental leave — paid or unpaid
- career break schemes
- sick child leave
- flexible hours
- child care provision

11. Where would the resistance for increased benefits to workers with family responsibilities come from?
- supervisors
- management
- workers concerned about special treatment of some workers
- unions

12. Where in the company would problems related to workers with family problems be raised? (human resource manager, industrial relations officer, managers/supervisors)

13. Have any issues related to work and family been raised at management or training meetings? Are they referred to in training and development seminars?

14. Who would make decisions about e.g. whether to offer reduced hours after a return to maternity leave, taking leave to care for a sick or elderly relative?

15. How would change occur? What would be needed to introduce benefits such as child care, career breaks, sick leave for children, parental leave, flexible hours?
- employee pressure
- management pressure
- legislation making provision mandatory
- government incentives (what kind?)

union pressure
competition with other companies

Corporate Values

16. How does the company define a successful worker? What counts towards promotion and recognition?

How do these differ for management/general workers?

17. Under normal working conditions, in order to perform their job satisfactorily, how often would it be necessary for workers to:

work overtime
stay at work late
come in early
travel
work weekends or holidays
transfer or relocate
take work home in the evening or weekends
participate in staff training or development outside working hours

For each of these areas, in which job classifications?

18. What is the company's (your) attitude towards women working, men and women sharing work and family responsibilities?

19. Who do you, the company, feel should be responsible for providing benefits to assist workers with family responsibilities?

mainly government
mainly employers
mainly employees

20. How should they be paid for?

21. Does your company expect people who want to get ahead in their jobs or careers to spend less time with their families?

Fewer Australian families today fit the traditional image of man as the sole breadwinner and woman as family caretaker. Of all two-parent families with dependent children in 1990, only 33 per cent fitted that pattern. Whether out of financial necessity or a desire to fulfil personal aspirations, more and more women are joining the paid workforce, while there is a growing acceptance that both partners should share the responsibility of caring for family members.

Employers are recognising that family and work are not mutually exclusive, and are considering ways to accommodate the needs of their workers with family responsibilities while maintaining productivity. Some measures have been the result of government initiatives and union pressure; other changes have been made in the interests of retaining valued and skilled employees. But action and attitude do not necessarily go hand in hand. In *Work and Family: Employers' Views*, Ilene Wolcott asks employers what they think about the changes taking place in the workforce.

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